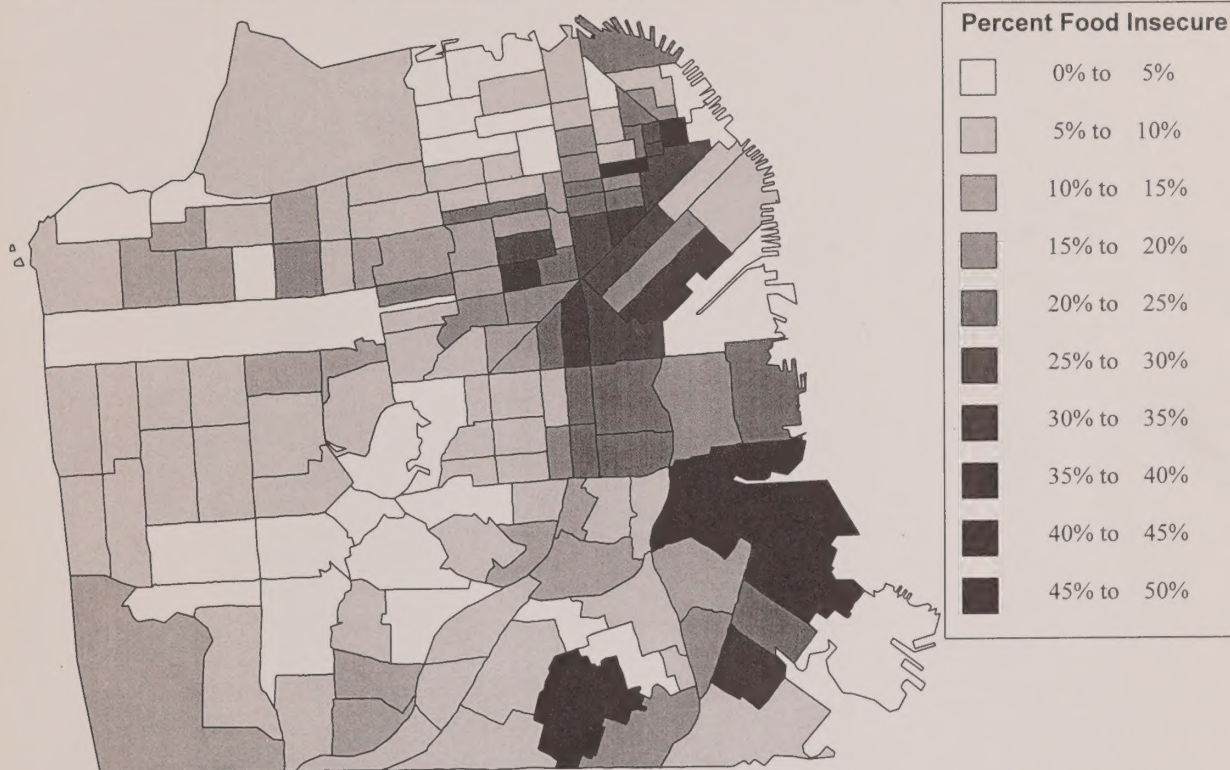


Hunger In San Francisco:

Fragmented Services, Unmet Needs

Hunger in San Francisco



November 1994



TABLE OF CONTENTS

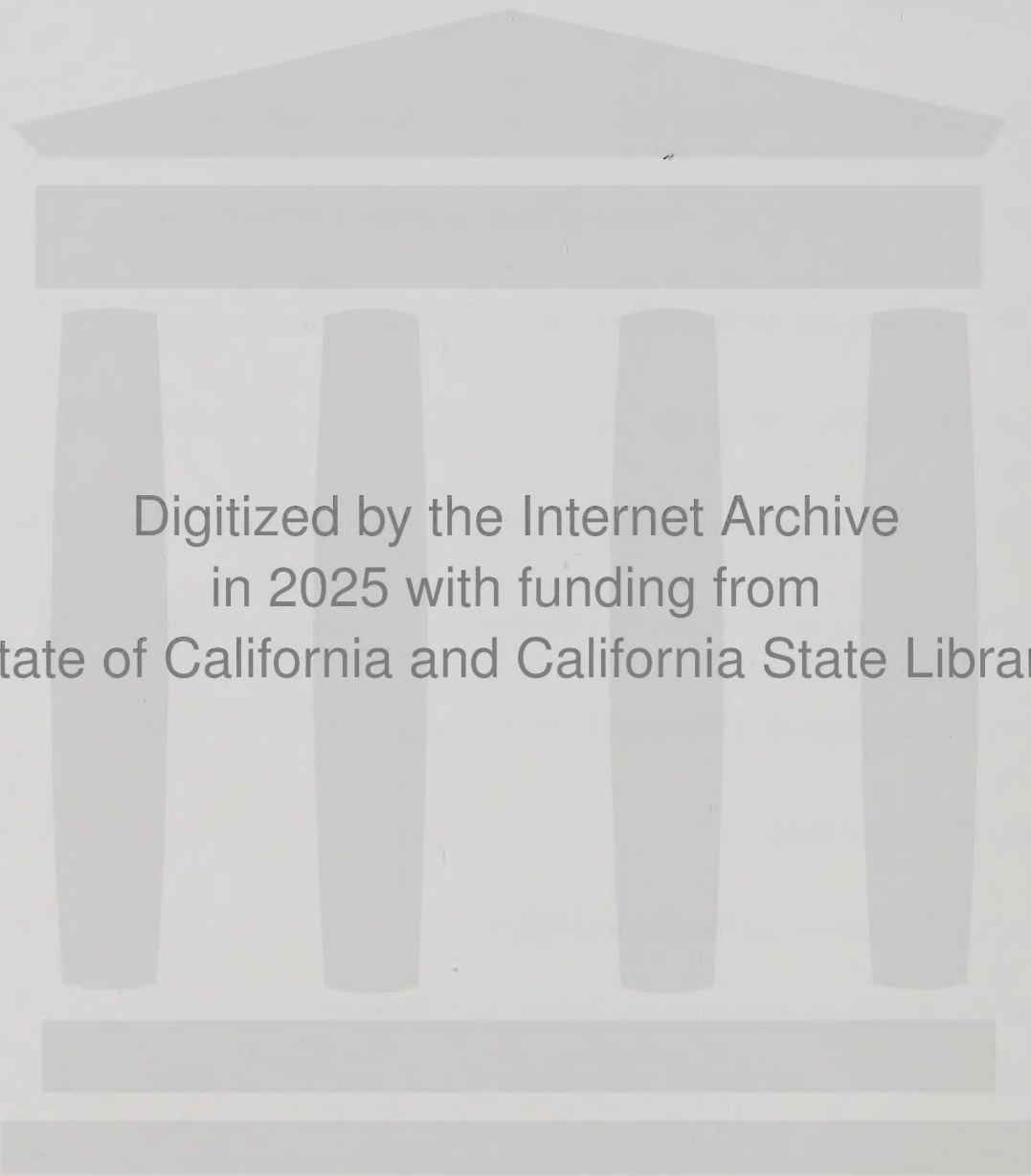
Executive Summary

Chapter I:	Hunger in San Francisco	1
Chapter II:	The Meaning and Context of Hunger in San Francisco	7
Chapter III:	Access and Availability of Services	11
Chapter IV:	Public Food Programs	17
Chapter V:	Special Needs and Population Groups	23
Chapter VI:	Systems Issues in Food Assistance	27
Chapter VII:	Next Steps and Recommendations	31
Appendix A: Methodology		
Appendix B: Neighborhood Profiles and Maps		
Appendix C: Acknowledgements and Committee Members		

INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENTAL
STUDIES LIBRARY

JAN 10 1995

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
State of California and California State Library

<https://archive.org/details/C101696845>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The San Francisco Food Bank, with support from the San Francisco Foundation, undertook a nine-month collaborative effort to study hunger in the community. Using a combination of primary and secondary research, the study was designed to examine: 1) the extent of hunger among San Francisco residents, 2) the experience of the hungry, 3) the current network and resources of food assistance providers.

In general, the study found that at widely differing levels, there exists a diverse population living in poverty and at risk of hunger in each of San Francisco's neighborhoods. The community's ability to address the problem of hunger efficiently and effectively is weak. The programs and services designed to meet the needs are fragmented and inadequate. The need to improve and expand food assistance for the hungry is significant and immediate.

Key findings from the study include:

A definition and estimation of hunger

- One in ten adults and one in five children in San Francisco are at risk of being hungry.
- More than 90,000 San Francisco residents, including over 20,000 infants and children, experience problems getting enough food during any given month, with an additional 60,000 at serious risk. (Figures are based on a conservative poverty-based estimation using 1990 U.S. Census data.)
- Hunger, the shortage of enough food for a healthy life, is inextricably linked to poverty.
- Hunger is most often caused by the inability to afford food or to shop for, store or prepare food. It is also caused by the lack of access to food assistance programs.

A geographic and demographic profile of hunger

- Hunger in San Francisco cuts across, ethnic and racial groups, ages and genders. Children, single men, immigrants and refugees, elders, persons with HIV/AIDS, families, undocumented residents, Food Stamp recipients, substance users, unemployed persons, students, the working poor, homebound persons, persons with mental health diagnoses and many others are part of the population of hungry in our city.
- The highest incidence of hunger is among African-Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans. The largest number of hungry are Caucasians.
- Every neighborhood in San Francisco is home to hungry individuals and families. Rates of hunger differ widely from neighborhood to neighborhood. Three hunger "epicenters" exist in San Francisco: Bayview/Hunters Point, Central City (north/south of Market Street) and Potrero Hill.

An understanding of fragmented food assistance services

- The absence of a comprehensive national or local hunger policy is reflected in the disparate, inconsistent, and fragmented programs offering food assistance.
- Geographically, there exists an imbalance of services and needs. Access to and availability of food assistance is lacking in some of the neighborhoods where it is needed most.
- Hunger has evolved from an emergency situation to a chronic need. This shift challenges food providers, many of which base their services on short-term, not chronic need.

- The food assistance system can best be described as having breadth, but very little depth. More than 87% of food programs offer limited services to existing clients and/or are unable to accept new clients. For many hungry people, finding enough to eat has become a full-time job.

A DEFINITION AND ESTIMATION OF HUNGER

The interrelationship between hunger and poverty is clear and inseparable. The study confirmed that poverty is the primary cause of hunger. Poverty statistics from the 1990 U.S. Census were used to obtain a conservative estimate of the prevalence of hunger in San Francisco.

The experience of hunger among San Franciscans varies according to personal, cultural, and socioeconomic circumstances. Hunger, as defined in this study, is *a condition in which the level of nutrition necessary for good health is not being met because of lack of access to food and/or a situation in which someone cannot obtain an adequate amount of food, even if the shortage is not prolonged enough to cause health problems.*

Hunger occurs when an environment of poverty and/or an inaccessibility to food exists. This environment, or situation of food insecurity, is defined as *the limited or uncertain access to nutritionally adequate and safe foods obtained in socially acceptable ways.*

The problem of hunger is persistent. For many families and individuals, hunger is a chronic and routine part of life. Five sets of factors were identified as the principal causes for the chronicity of hunger:

- erosion of "safety net" assistance (benefit reductions, fewer public services)
- unemployment and limited job opportunities for less-skilled workers
- institutionalization of welfare dependence (the system is not set up to alleviate dependence or to break the cycle of poverty)
- declining federal and local resources to address poverty and hunger
- basic survival becomes an all-consuming effort (time and energy is spent accessing food assistance instead of other efforts to escape poverty).

A GEOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF HUNGER

Race/Ethnicity

The population with the highest incidence of hunger in San Francisco is African-American. The rate is also high among Native Americans and Hispanics.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF FOOD INSECURE PERSONS IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1990

RACE/ETHNICITY	# FOOD INSECURE	FOOD INSECURE	
		AS % OF ETHNIC POPULATION	% OF S.F. FOOD INSECURE GROUP
Native Americans	686	21.0%	0.7%
African-American	20,096	26.2%	22.3%
Asian-Pacific Islander	26,426	12.6%	29.4%
Caucasian	35,205	9.3%	39.1%
Other	<u>7,606</u>	18.3%	<u>8.5%</u>
San Francisco Total	90,019	Avg = 12.7%	100.0%

*Hispanics not identified as "race" in 1990 U.S. Census and included in all other categories.

Source: 1990 U.S. Census STF3A

Age

Poverty, food insecurity and hunger affect persons of all ages in San Francisco, from infants to elders. Hunger is most prevalent among San Franciscans under age 18. An estimated one in five infants, children and adolescents and one in ten adults in San Francisco regularly experience food insecurity and a high risk of hunger.

Neighborhood

Every neighborhood in San Francisco is home to hungry individuals and families. From the Marina to Hunters Point, Chinatown to Visitacion Valley, hunger exists throughout the city, although at widely different rates. The study has discovered three "epicenters" of hunger: Bayview/Hunters Point, Central City (north/south of Market Street), and Potrero Hill.

FOOD INSECURITY IN SAN FRANCISCO'S NEIGHBORHOODS, 1990

NEIGHBORHOOD	ESTIMATED # FOOD INSECURE PERSONS	FOOD INSECURE	
		AS % OF NEIGHBORHOOD POPULATION	ESTIMATED # AT RISK OF FOOD INSECURITY
Bayview/Hunters Point	7,003	25.4%	2,562
Central City	9,607	21.9%	9,502
Chinatown/North Beach	9,349	16.6%	8,834
Marina	1,696	5.4%	1,047
Mission	14,745	16.9%	9,517
OMI	6,378	7.5%	3,109
Outer Mission	6,371	8.5%	4,980
Potrero Hill	2,001	20.5%	577
Sunset/Richmond	15,685	8.5%	10,366
Visitacion Valley	5,004	16.5%	2,442
Western Addition/Haight	<u>12,180</u>	15.6%	<u>7,698</u>
San Francisco Total	90,019	Avg = 12.7%	60,634

Source: 1990 U.S. Census STF3A

While the three epicenters are home to a large percentage of the hungry, the study found the largest absolute number of hungry persons in poverty resides in the Sunset/Richmond and Mission areas. Together these areas account for one third of the city's total hungry population.

FRAGMENTED SYSTEM OF FOOD ASSISTANCE

The lack of a comprehensive national or local hunger policy is reflected in the diverse and sometimes inconsistent goals and strategies of the many federal and local food assistance programs. Programs are often fragmented, uncoordinated and inefficient. The study found that many of the programs do not respond to the real need of the community (e.g. programs offering emergency food assistance are not set up for the growing number of chronically hungry). The absence of a central intake process or repository of information further compounds the fragmentation of services.

In San Francisco, the distribution of food assistance is geographically uneven. Most programs are concentrated in the Central City and Mission neighborhoods. The areas with the least amount of service are Bayview/Hunters Point, Visitacion Valley, Oceanview/Merced/Ingleside, Sunset/Richmond and Potrero Hill, where hunger is comparatively high.

Nearly 215 meals, food, and commodity programs now operate within the city. They include: emergency and long-term food pantries, soup kitchens, senior sites, long-term home-delivered meals, brown bag and emergency food box sites. Another 237 agencies offer food assistance as an adjunct to their primary service (e.g. meals in a residential treatment facility or child care center). The primary function of these agencies is to meet needs other than hunger, such as job training and counseling.

Fewer than 25% of the 452 total agencies are available on a daily basis to provide emergency food assistance and most of these have met or exceeded their capacities to serve hungry clients. More than 87% of the agencies offer limited services, providing one or two meals per week.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following series of recommendations are made to begin the process of mobilizing focused, collaborative action in San Francisco to expand and improve existing food resources and developing new ones.

I. Promote Awareness

Increase public awareness of hunger. Elevate the priority, within San Francisco, given to food and hunger. Develop a comprehensive, unified hunger policy to ensure equitable distribution of resources based on need. Empower communities to respond to hunger on a local level.

II. Balance Needs and Services

Strengthen the balance of emergency and long-term food providers. Develop programs and services based upon prevalence of hunger and need. Expand food assistance to a broader constituency of clients, particularly the working poor. Develop budgeting and nutrition counseling programs to help families and individuals use their food money more effectively.

III. Consolidate Efforts

Encourage greater collaboration/consolidation and eliminate duplication in functions of food assistance providers.

IV. Improve Communication

Develop a mechanism to improve program-related communication and operations among food assistance providers. Strengthen the information and referral system to respond to hunger-related needs. Expand outreach efforts designed to enroll eligible individuals in federal food assistance programs.

The findings and recommendations from the study will serve as a call to action for community leaders to give a high priority to reducing the level of both poverty and hunger in San Francisco. Appropriate and effective next steps in the areas of service, systems and policy-making will require:

- a higher level of hunger awareness
- more visible community and political leadership
- an openness to change and new approaches to community-level problem-solving
- a realignment of resources and programs serving poor individuals and families.

The degree to which we respond to the study's findings and recommendations will be a good measure of our commitment to the well-being of our residents and our community.

The information gathered and analyzed for "Hunger in San Francisco: Fragmented Services, Unmet Needs" included data from the 1990 U.S. Census (used to determine estimates of food insecurity and hunger risk), data from the San Francisco Food Bank member agency database, and a resource inventory (to quantify the existing food assistance level through survey and analysis), interviews with "key informants" (including providers and policy-makers), interviews with food recipients and feedback from community meetings and focus groups. An advisory committee comprised of local providers and policy-makers guided the process.

The San Francisco Food Bank wishes to thank the San Francisco Foundation, members of the community advisory committee, and all the individuals who participated in community meetings, focus groups, surveys and interviews. The study could not have been completed without your input.

"Hunger in San Francisco: Fragmented Services, Unmet Needs" was funded with a grant from the San Francisco Foundation.

CHAPTER I: HUNGER IN SAN FRANCISCO

"The only barometers [for measuring hunger] are soup kitchen lines. But for every person in line there are at least 10 hungry people not standing in line." - Soup kitchen director

"If you're not addressing poverty, you're not addressing hunger." - Homeless advocate

"Too much month at the end of the money."
- Tenderloin resident

"...when you're getting off of the highway, you see people on the islands holding signs that say, 'Will work for food.' For food, not money. Years ago you didn't see that as much."
- Department of Public Health worker

Overview

Hunger, the shortage of enough food for a healthy life, affects one in eight San Franciscans. Using an estimation technique based on the prevalence of poverty (Appendix A), this study conservatively estimates that more than 90,000 San Francisco residents experience problems getting enough food during any given month, with an additional 60,000 at serious risk. This chapter provides a snapshot of the estimated 90,019 San Franciscans who are at the highest risk of hunger.

The research conducted for this study reaffirmed the strong link between poverty and hunger. As the 1994 report *Hunger in California: A State of Need*¹ states, "Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked; most poor people are hungry and virtually all of the hungry are poor." This study of hunger in San Francisco is based on poverty statistics from the 1990 U.S. Census, which yield a conservative estimate of the number of poor and hungry in San Francisco today.

Thus, the estimates of food insecurity and hunger risk presented in this study are based on poverty data from the 1990 U.S. Census (STF 3A), reflecting income information for 1989. Use of the federal poverty level as a proxy measure for estimating the number of food-insecure persons at high risk of hunger is appropriate for San Francisco, given the comparatively high cost of living in the Bay Area compared to national averages.

The federal definition of poverty is based on the ability of an individual or family to purchase food for an adequate diet. The costs of the "Thrifty Food Plan" are adjusted annually to create the national poverty level. Individual and family hunger results when poverty creates uncertainty regarding access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Thus, poverty creates a situation of "food insecurity," which often results in hunger. This set of relationships tells us that efforts designed to reduce or prevent hunger must realistically address the persistent problem of poverty in a comprehensive, long-range manner.

Hunger in San Francisco cuts across neighborhoods, ethnic and racial groups, ages and genders. Children, single men, immigrants and refugees, elders, persons with HIV/AIDS, families, undocumented residents, Food Stamp recipients, substance users, unemployed persons, students, the working poor, homebound persons, persons with mental health diagnoses and many others are part of the population of hungry in our city.

Only a small portion of San Francisco's hunger problem is visible in lines for meal programs, at commodity distribution sites and among the city's homeless population. Most of the time, hunger in San Francisco is hidden from public view, and this leads to the false perception that the problem of hunger is limited to the poorest of the poor. The findings from this study clearly and decisively contradict this misconception. Hunger is a serious and widespread problem in San Francisco that affects between 90,000 and 150,000 San Franciscans every month.

The problem of hunger is persistent. For many individuals and families, hunger is chronic, a routine part of life. Current food assistance resources are not sufficient to meet the high level of need, and habitual reductions in programs designed to fight poverty mean few of the 90,000 hungry persons in San Francisco will be able to escape the cycle of poverty and hunger.

Profile of San Francisco's Hungry

While hunger affects all geographic areas and population groups in San Francisco, data from the 1990 U.S. Census analyzed for this study indicate that hunger disproportionately affects communities of color and selected neighborhoods and age groups.

Racial/Ethnic Profile

Using the 1990 U.S. Census poverty data, it is evident that persons of color, particularly Native Americans, African-Americans and Hispanics,* experience a higher prevalence of food insecurity and hunger than do Asian-Americans and Caucasians, as the data in Table 1 indicate.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF FOOD INSECURE PERSONS IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1990			
RACE/ETHNICITY	# FOOD INSECURE	FOOD INSECURE AS % OF RACIAL POPULATION	% OF SF FOOD INSECURE GROUP
Native American	686	21.0%	0.7%
African-American	20,096	26.2%	22.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	26,426	12.6%	29.4%
Caucasian	35,205	9.3%	39.1%
Other	<u>7,606</u>	<u>18.3%</u>	<u>8.5%</u>
San Francisco Total	90,019	Avg = 12.7%	100.0%

*Hispanics not identified as "race" in 1990 U.S. Census and included in all other categories.

Source: 1990 U.S. Census STF3A TABLE 1

The highest incidence of hunger occurs in San Francisco's African-American community, where an estimated 20,096 individuals are at high risk of hunger. This represents 26.2% of the city's total African-American population. The rate also is high (21.0%) among Native American residents. For persons of Hispanic origin, 15,548 (16.4% of all Hispanics) are estimated to be at high risk of hunger in San Francisco.

The single largest number of people living below the poverty line in San Francisco is Caucasians, with an estimated total of 35,205 persons experiencing food insecurity and high hunger risk. This accounts for 9.3% of all Caucasian residents. The second largest number of persons below poverty are Asian/Pacific Islanders, with 26,426 persons at high risk of hunger, accounting for 12.6% of all Asian/Pacific Islanders in San Francisco.

Age Profile

Poverty, food insecurity and hunger affect persons of all ages in San Francisco, from infants to elders. Poverty is most prevalent among those San Franciscans under age 18, with an estimated 21,228 infants, children and youth in poverty, accounting for 18.6% of this age group. These figures, presented in Table 2, tell us that one in five San Francisco infants, children and adolescents experiences food insecurity and a high risk of hunger.

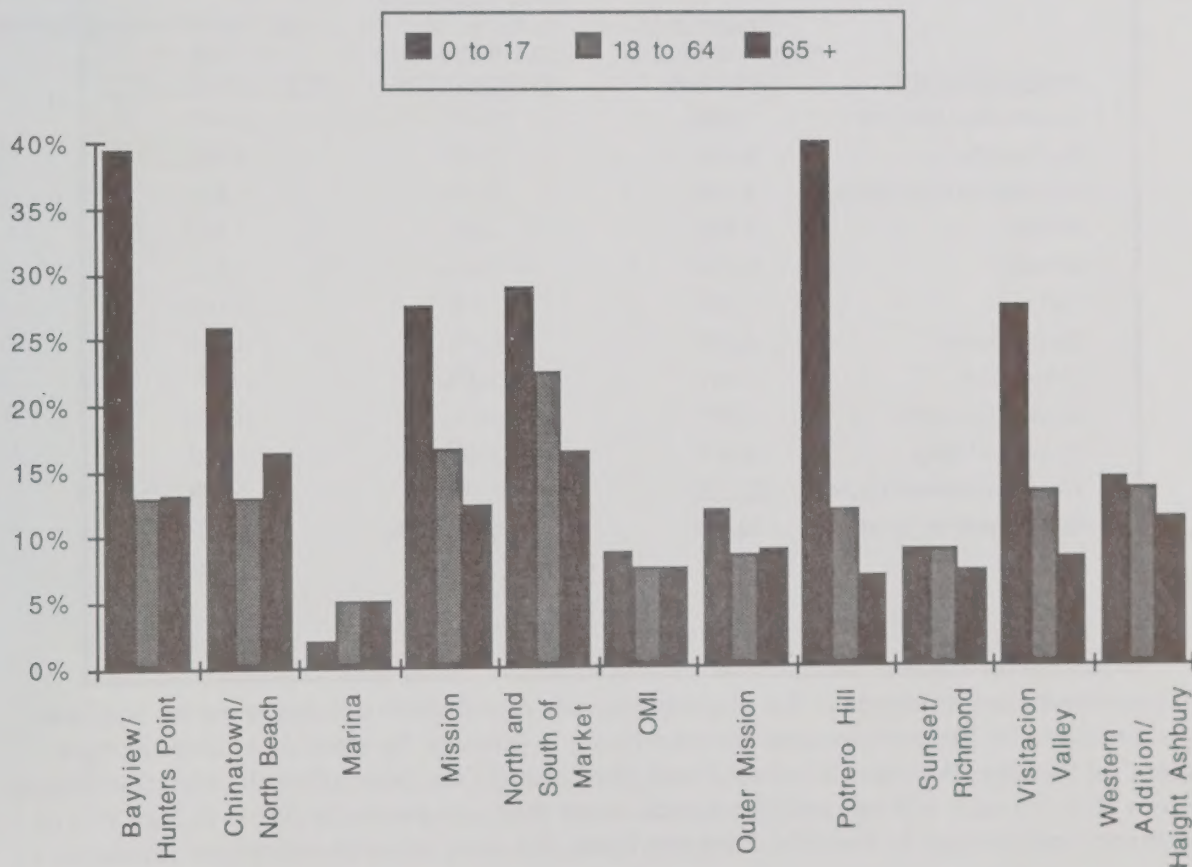
AGE OF FOOD INSECURE PERSONS IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1990

AGE GROUP	# FOOD INSECURE	FOOD INSECURE AS % OF AGE GROUP	% OF SF FOOD INSECURE POPULATION
0 - 17	21,228	18.6%	23.6%
18 - 64	58,640	11.9%	65.1%
65+	<u>10,151</u>	9.9%	<u>11.3%</u>
San Francisco Total	90,019	Avg = 12.7%	100.0%

Source: 1990 U.S. Census STF3A TABLE 2

For adults age 18 to 64, 58,640 persons are estimated to be in poverty and food-insecure, or 11.9% of this age group. For persons age 65 or older, the proportion is 9.9% or 10,151 older adults. These data indicate that roughly one in 10 adults (age 18 or older) regularly experiences food insecurity, and often hunger, in San Francisco.

Percentage of Age Group Who is Food Insecure by Neighborhood



Source: 1990 U.S. Census STF3A

Gender Profile

Poverty, food insecurity and hunger are equal opportunity problems in San Francisco. Among the city's estimated 90,019 at-risk individuals, 47,305 (52.6%) are women and 42,714 (47.4%) are men, as the data in Table 3 indicate.

GENDER OF FOOD INSECURE PERSONS IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1990		
<u>GENDER</u>	<u># FOOD INSECURE</u>	<u>% OF ALL FOOD INSECURE PERSONS</u>
FEMALE	47,305	52.6%
MALE	<u>42,714</u>	<u>47.4%</u>
TOTAL	90,019	100.0%

Source: 1990 U.S. Census STF3A TABLE 3

Neighborhood Profile

Every neighborhood in San Francisco is home to hungry individuals and families. From the Marina to Hunters Point, Chinatown to Visitacion Valley, food insecurity and hunger persist throughout San Francisco, although at widely different rates, as the data in Table 4 show.

FOOD INSECURITY IN SAN FRANCISCO'S NEIGHBORHOODS, 1990			
<u>NEIGHBORHOOD</u>	<u>ESTIMATED # FOOD INSECURE PERSONS</u>	<u>FOOD INSECURE AS % OF NEIGHBORHOOD POPULATION</u>	<u>ESTIMATED # AT RISK OF FOOD INSECURITY</u>
Bayview/Hunters Point	7,003	25.4%	2,562
Central City	9,607	21.9%	9,502
Chinatown/North Beach	9,349	16.6%	8,834
Marina	1,696	5.4%	1,047
Mission	14,745	16.9%	9,517
OMI	6,378	7.5%	3,109
Outer Mission	6,371	8.5%	4,980
Potrero Hill	2,001	20.5%	577
Sunset/Richmond	15,685	8.5%	10,366
Visitacion Valley	5,004	16.5%	2,442
Western Addition/Haight	<u>12,180</u>	15.6%	<u>7,698</u>
San Francisco Total	90,019	Avg = 12.7%	60,634

Source: 1990 U.S. Census STF3A TABLE 4

This data provides stark evidence of the disproportionate distribution of hunger across San Francisco. As measured by the prevalence of persons living in poverty, the data show three hunger "epicenters" in the city: Bayview/Hunters Point, the Central City (North/South of Market Street) and Potrero Hill. In each of these neighborhoods, more than one person in five is at high risk of food insecurity and hunger. In Bayview/Hunters Point, the ratio is one in every four residents.

The second tier of neighborhood hunger consists of the Mission, where 16.9% of residents are estimated to be food-insecure and at highest risk of hunger; Chinatown/North Beach (16.6%); Visitacion Valley (16.5%); and the Western Addition/Haight Ashbury (15.6%). In these neighborhoods, approximately one resident in six or seven is living in poverty and at highest risk of hunger.

The prevalence of food insecurity is lower, but still significant, in the Outer Mission and Sunset / Richmond districts (8.5%). The Oceanview/Merced/Ingleside (which will be abbreviated to OMI in this study) neighborhood is at 7.5%. The lowest incidence of poverty and food insecurity occurs in the Marina (5.4%).

The data in Table 4 also indicate that the largest absolute numbers of persons in poverty reside in the Sunset/Richmond and Mission districts, which together account for more than 30,000 food-insecure persons, or one-third of the city's total.

The number of individuals at a second-level risk of hunger during any month totals 60,634, with large numbers of at-risk individuals in the Sunset/Richmond, Mission, Central City (north/south of Market), Chinatown/North Beach and Western Addition/Haight neighborhoods. These are people whose incomes range from 100% to 150% of the federal poverty level, which ranks them among the food-insecure and places them at risk of not being able to get enough to eat.

Summary

Using a very conservative poverty-based estimation technique and 1990 U.S. Census data, this hunger study estimates that at least 90,019 San Francisco residents experience food insecurity and a high risk of hunger. This accounts for 12.7% of the city's population, or about one in every eight San Franciscans. Persons of color, younger persons and residents of the Bayview/Hunters Point, Potrero Hill, and Central City neighborhoods are most at risk of food insecurity and hunger, which nevertheless exists in every area of San Francisco.

¹ *Hunger in California: A State of Need*, California-Nevada Community Action Association, June 1994.

CHAPTER II: THE MEANING AND CONTEXT OF HUNGER IN SAN FRANCISCO

*"I see women who can't take care of themselves;
how are they going to take care of their children?"*
- Public hospital nutritionist

*"You don't necessarily have to be homeless
to be hungry."* - School counselor

*"I think the American Dream of owning a home
is no longer there. The dream is now to have enough
food. As a single parent, this is very scary."*
- Department of Public Health worker

*"San Franciscans tolerate the fact that there are
thousands of people standing in line at the two
major food programs in San Francisco. They're
just part of the landscape."* - Outreach worker

Introduction

What is hunger? Is hunger an acute or chronic problem? How does hunger relate to other social problems associated with poverty? Answering these key questions is essential for understanding and responding to the persistent problem of hunger in San Francisco. In interviews, focus groups and community meetings conducted for this study, clients, providers, advocates and community leaders were asked about these issues and their implications for making meaningful progress against persistent individual and family hunger. Their answers are both enlightening and daunting. The challenge of eradicating poverty, food insecurity and hunger from San Francisco appears more problematic than ever before, given growing needs and shrinking resources.

Defining Hunger

At the outset of this hunger study, members of the research team and the community advisory committee made a sustained effort to develop a practical definition of hunger.

One of the difficulties they faced is that the experience of hunger among San Franciscans varies according to personal, cultural and socioeconomic circumstances. Time is another variable; the hungry individual's or family's circumstances can change dramatically from month to month. However, a working definition of hunger emerged from the common themes identified throughout this study:

Hunger is a condition in which the level of nutrition necessary for good health is not being met because of lack of access to food and/or a situation in which someone cannot obtain an adequate amount of food, even if the shortage is not prolonged enough to cause health problems. (Adapted from the President's Task Force on Food Assistance, 1984)

Most often, hunger occurs when an environment of poverty and/or a lack of access to food exists. This environment, or situation of "food insecurity," is a principal consequence of poverty. In this study, food insecurity is defined as:

The limited or uncertain access to nutritionally adequate and safe foods obtained in socially acceptable ways. (Adapted from Campbell, C.; Food Insecurity: Definitions and Measurements, 1980)

What Causes Hunger?

The problems of food insecurity and hunger manifest themselves differently in particular population groups. From the descriptions offered by current and formerly hungry individuals, it appears that several factors "cause" hunger:

- **The inability to afford enough food.**

Individuals and families with low and/or fixed incomes, those relying on welfare benefits and those without any regular source of income face the highest prevalence of food insecurity and the greatest risk of hunger. At the lowest income levels, hunger is a daily occurrence. Other groups, such as the working poor or Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients, experience hunger more episodically, often several days before the arrival of pay/benefit checks. Erosion of public welfare, coupled with punitive policies regarding employment while on welfare, has increased the prevalence and severity of hunger. So, too, has the escalating cost of living (particularly food and housing) in San Francisco. This study discovered many examples of families (working and not working) forced to choose between buying food and paying rent and utility bills.

- **The inability to shop for food.**

Persons with medical and physical limitations, including those who are homebound, experience food insecurity and hunger because of their limited ability to shop at a grocery store or obtain free groceries from existing distribution sources. Homeless people and others with very low incomes find the cost of public transportation, such as MUNI or BART, prohibitive, making it very difficult to shop city-wide for grocery bargains and to get to food distribution or meals sites. People living in areas perceived to be dangerous experience isolation, too, which limits food shopping and other essential tasks. In each of these situations, getting to sources of food or meals on a daily basis represents the equivalent of a full-time job.

- **The inability to store food.**

Persons who are homeless, residents of single-room-occupancy (SRO) hotels, residents in crowded or sub-standard housing and others without food storage (principally a working refrigerator) experience food insecurity and often hunger because they cannot safely preserve perishable items. These individuals often find themselves limited as to the types of non-perishable foods they can prepare. Most of those without food storage also have very low incomes, further complicating the problem of regularly getting enough to eat.

- **The inability to prepare food.**

Persons with physical limitations experience difficulties getting enough to eat because they are often unable to prepare meals for themselves. Home-delivered meals and in-home supportive services (IHSS) workers meet some of the need, but serious gaps remain. For persons without fully equipped residences (homeless persons, SRO residents), the absence of cooking facilities greatly limits food and meal choices and makes getting enough to eat especially difficult.

These factors impede the ability of individuals and families to obtain enough food for their survival. Hunger, then, is not one problem, but many. Responding effectively to the hunger problem will require a multiplicity of coordinated efforts, based on strategies targeting these key hunger-causing factors. Ultimately, though, short-term food assistance strategies must be augmented with meaningful, comprehensive and long-term interventions to reduce poverty and prevent hunger.

Hunger as a Chronic Problem

One of the most disturbing findings from this study of hunger in San Francisco is the evolution of hunger from an emergency situation to a chronic problem experienced by individuals and families. Hunger has always existed in this community and probably always will. In that sense, hunger is a chronic social problem. But in times past, many of those who became hungry eventually found a means of solving their problems, with or without private or public assistance.

This study shows that the situation has changed significantly during the past 10 to 15 years, to the point where today fewer and fewer individuals and families have been able to escape hunger and poverty. The rise in chronic individual and family hunger has resulted in higher levels of hunger in San Francisco over time. Most providers and advocates expect that this problematic trend will continue into the foreseeable future. Such a scenario poses a serious challenge to the network of food providers, many of which base their services on short-term, not chronic, food needs.

Hunger as a Poverty Indicator

The interrelationship between hunger and poverty is clear and inseparable. In this study, poverty statistics are used to estimate the prevalence of hunger among San Franciscans. From a planning and social policy perspective, however, the reverse analysis may be of greater usefulness. Hunger represents one of several visible markers of poverty (along with homelessness, education scores and crime) in a community, effectively "the tip of the iceberg," as one study participant characterized it. While hunger may be hidden from public view, it is affecting growing segments of the San Francisco population, including many working individuals and families.

The growing problem of hunger in San Francisco manifests itself in longer lines at emergency meals sites; increased requests for emergency food assistance; longer lines at brown bag and commodity distribution sites; endless waiting lists for home-delivered meals (and other services); and the growing number of food assistance providers unable to accept new clients because of an overload of cases. Five sets of factors were identified in this study as the principal causes underlying these disturbing trends:

- **Erosion of "safety net" assistance**

Income assistance, supportive and health care services and other elements of the social safety net have eroded steadily over the past several years. Benefit reductions, coupled with fewer public services, have steadily reduced options for poor individuals and families, many of whom are trapped in poverty and experience food insecurity and hunger as chronic problems.

- **Unemployment and limited job opportunities for less-skilled workers**

The protracted economic recession throughout California has increased unemployment and made it especially difficult for less-skilled workers to obtain living-wage employment. When unemployment benefits run out, more and more individuals and families are forced to rely on private help and public assistance, neither of which provides long-term support at adequate levels to prevent hunger.

- **Institutionalization of welfare dependence**

Current public welfare policy in California is creating a distinction between AFDC recipients who have jobs and those who rely only on their AFDC benefits for family income. While benefits have been increased for those on AFDC who have jobs (such as the expansion of earnings disregards and reimbursement for child care costs), benefits have steadily declined for those AFDC recipients who do not have jobs. AFDC grants have been cut by 12.9% since 1991. The recession in California has reduced the number of jobs available, especially for those who have limited employment skills or who have never had a job. Programs for job training have not been well-funded, leaving room for only a small percentage of AFDC recipients to learn the skills which would help them become employable. In order to break the cycle of poverty and dependence on the welfare system, there must be an adequate number of jobs that provide pay and benefits at a higher level than that offered by welfare. In addition, it is critical that welfare recipients receive assistance in overcoming the skill deficits that keep them from being self-sufficient. According to one community meeting participant, "The system is just not set up to

help people who want to help themselves.”

- **Declining resources to address poverty and hunger**

While the levels of poverty and hunger increase, funding for programs that provide long-term solutions (job training, special education, child care, counseling, health care services) are in a steady decline. Providers of food assistance and other social services throughout San Francisco report funding problems and increasing calls for assistance. The inevitable result is (and will continue to be) persistent poverty and increasing hunger.

- **The burden of just getting by, day to day**

For San Franciscans who experience regular hunger, the effort required to “get by” each day effectively prevents them from seeking assistance (if they are lucky enough to find it) which could make a long-term difference in their lives. Simply finding enough to eat each day can be a full-time job, especially as lines and waiting times have gotten longer. Survival has become the daily focus for more and more San Franciscans.

Federal Food Resources

During the past 50 years, a significant number of food assistance programs have been developed in the public sector, most often by the federal government (descriptions of these programs, their benefits and participation rates are presented in Chapter IV). The majority of public food assistance programs target specific at-risk populations: pregnant women, infants, schoolchildren, poor families and older adults. While public food assistance programs represent valuable resources in the response to food insecurity and hunger, several factors limit the overall impact of these important programs.

The lack of a comprehensive national hunger policy is reflected in the diverse, and sometimes inconsistent, goals and strategies of the many federal food assistance programs. Programs are administratively and operationally fragmented, reducing the opportunities for flexibility and efficiency.

For many food assistance programs, participation rates among eligible individuals and families are low, and outreach efforts are often limited. Increasing participation in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Food Stamps, school meals and other programs represents an important first step in dealing with the current, manifest problem of hunger.

Summary

Hunger in San Francisco is becoming more widespread, chronic and more closely tied to other social problems anchored in persistent poverty. Providing food and meals represents a critical survival resource, but to make an impact on the hunger problem on a long-term basis, the underlying issues of unemployment, job-skill development, services and welfare policy must be addressed.

CHAPTER III: ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES

"A tremendous amount of programs need to be created, not just for hunger, but to teach people to be self-sufficient."

- Community center director

"It would cut down on crowding if every neighborhood could take care of its poor."

- Social service program director

"I can't cook in my room; by default, we all end up in the soup line." - Soup kitchen guest

"Some of the food programs are working more efficiently. Unfortunately, they've had time to get better at what they do."

- Homeless/hunger advocate

San Francisco enjoys a large and diverse array of programs assisting people confronting hunger, and yet access to food programs remains a key problem identified by those seeking assistance. There are 215 programs in San Francisco providing food to low-income families and individuals, the ill or the elderly. Most of these provide food services as a secondary or tertiary emphasis of the program. In addition, another 237 programs offer food as part of a residential or child care program. These programs provide food only to participating individuals.

While at first glance food programs may appear adequate, the numbers are misleading. Nearly every neighborhood in the city has some food assistance program. Many additional food resources exist informally at churches, neighborhood stores and local organizations. However, more than 87% of these programs offer limited service -- serving one or two meals per week, offering food to a limited number of existing clients only or providing food to specific population groups or sub-groups.

For the average person new to dealing with the need for food assistance, the task can be daunting. There is no central intake procedure or repository of information that hungry individuals and families can use to access services. Furthermore, the vast majority of services are centered in two neighborhoods, making transportation another necessity for the hungry seeking emergency food assistance.

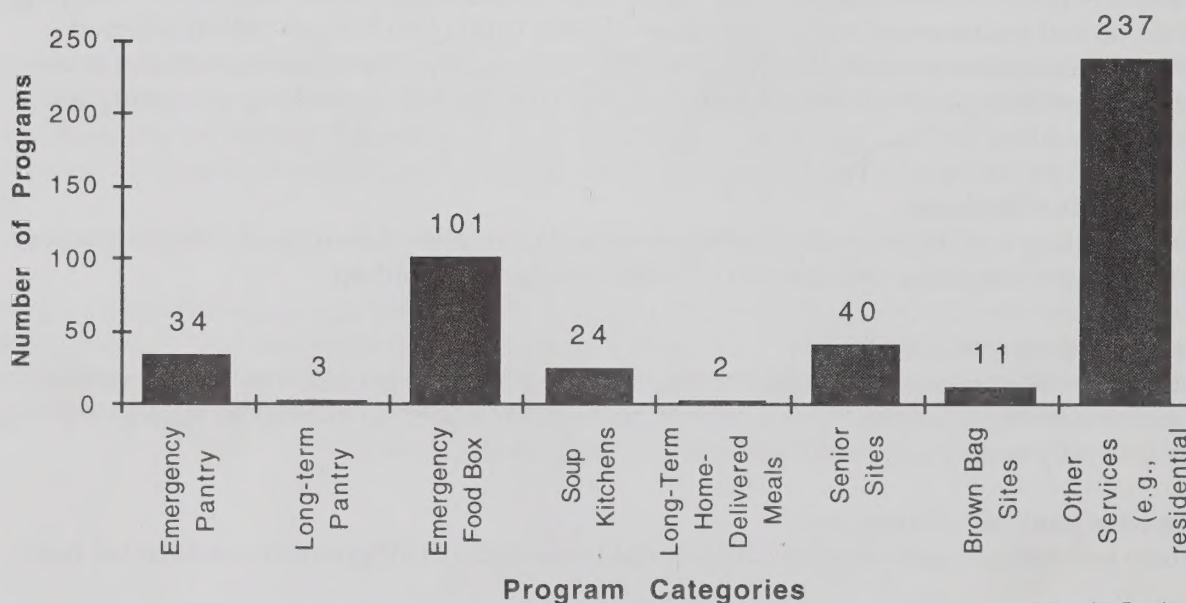
Food Distribution Methods

Agencies providing food to the public can be segregated by distribution method. For the purpose of this study, eight categories were used to describe program distribution:

- **Emergency pantry** (34 programs)
Pantries providing groceries that clients take home to prepare themselves on an emergency basis. Pantries are most often found in churches or as an adjunct to another food program. They generally supply very small amounts of mostly canned foods.
- **Long-term pantries** (3 programs)
Pantries providing regular supplies of groceries to the same client group on a scheduled basis.
- **Long-term home-delivered meals** (2 programs)
Hot meals delivered to the client's home on a regularly scheduled basis.

- **Emergency food box (EFB)** (101 participating sites)
A three-day supply of groceries that clients can access up to three times per year, generally through agencies providing services other than food provision (such as case management or medical services). Each agency is limited to five referrals per day. The EFB is a program of the San Francisco Food Bank and is listed separately because of the scope of its service and its unique distribution method.
- **Soup kitchens** (24 programs)
Hot meals provided for on-site consumption, generally open to all who state a need.
- **Senior sites** (40 programs)
Usually senior centers, providing snacks and/or hot meals along with an array of other services.
- **Brown bag sites** (11 sites)
Essentially a long-term pantry program open to low-income seniors only. The brown bag program is a state senior food program operated by the San Francisco Food Bank with partial funding by the California Department of Aging.
- **Other services** (237 programs)
Residential, medical and social service agencies that provide food incidentally to their primary service. They are not available for clients presenting with a primary problem of hunger.

San Francisco Food Assistance Resource Inventory, 1994



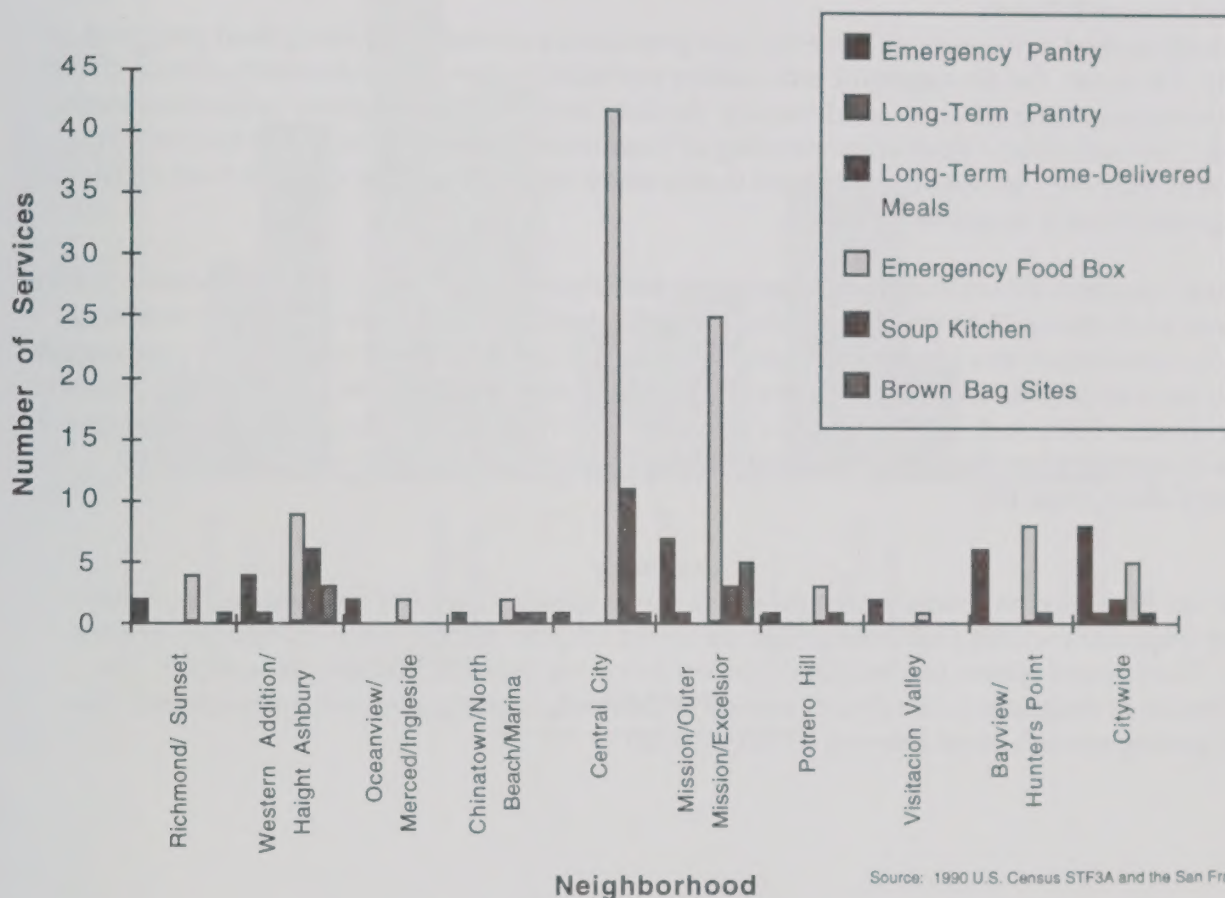
Source: San Francisco Food Bank

Hunger is rarely the presenting problem when a new client is served. Clients seek assistance for many different problems, yet hunger is often a hidden symptom of a more profound problem. Very little exists for clients after their emergency food allotments are gone, or once they have left a residential program that fed them and provided other, primary services.

Program Distribution and Accessibility

The distribution of agencies is geographically uneven. Most programs are concentrated in Central City and the Mission district. The areas with the least amount of service are Bayview/Hunters Point, Potrero Hill (two of the city's three hunger epicenters), Visitacion Valley, OMI and Sunset/Richmond. Large segments of those in need must travel a considerable distance to eat a hot meal or to obtain free groceries. For many, the task is all-consuming; finding bus fare, carrying children, waiting in lines and making return trips can transform receiving food assistance into a full-time job.

Distribution of Food Assistance Services in San Francisco, 1994



Source: 1990 U.S. Census STF3A and the San Francisco Food Bank

Bayview/Hunters Point and Potrero Hill, while having few services available, are two of the city's three hunger "epicenters" (the Central City is the third). For example, Bayview/Hunters Point has eight EFB sites, two soup kitchens and six small pantries to serve the more than 7,000 persons experiencing regular food insecurity and hunger. The programs in this neighborhood tend to be small, church-based organizations. We know, for instance, that the eight EFB sites will provide meals for a maximum of 40 families on a given day and that one of the soup kitchens, New Awakening Full Gospel Church, can feed approximately 200 persons. The capacity levels of the services in this neighborhood do not meet the needs of its residents.

It is important to note that these numbers refer to providers and their geographic location, not the capacity of the organization. The more pertinent point of this data is the issue of access to, rather than adequacy of, resources. To further illustrate, OMI represents approximately 7% of the total food-insecure in San Francisco, yet only 2% of the emergency food programs are available here.

Access in this neighborhood is clearly an issue. On the other hand, the Central City represents 32% of the emergency food programs and 22% of the food-insecure. Several of the programs in the Central City have very large capacities, feeding several thousand people in a day. The result is that the Central City acts as a hub of services for those in need throughout the city. Programs there still can not meet the needs with which they are daily presented.

In addition to the private food assistance programs listed above, a significant number of state and federal programs exist to assist those in need of food assistance. Information on those programs can be found in the following chapter.

Current Access Patterns

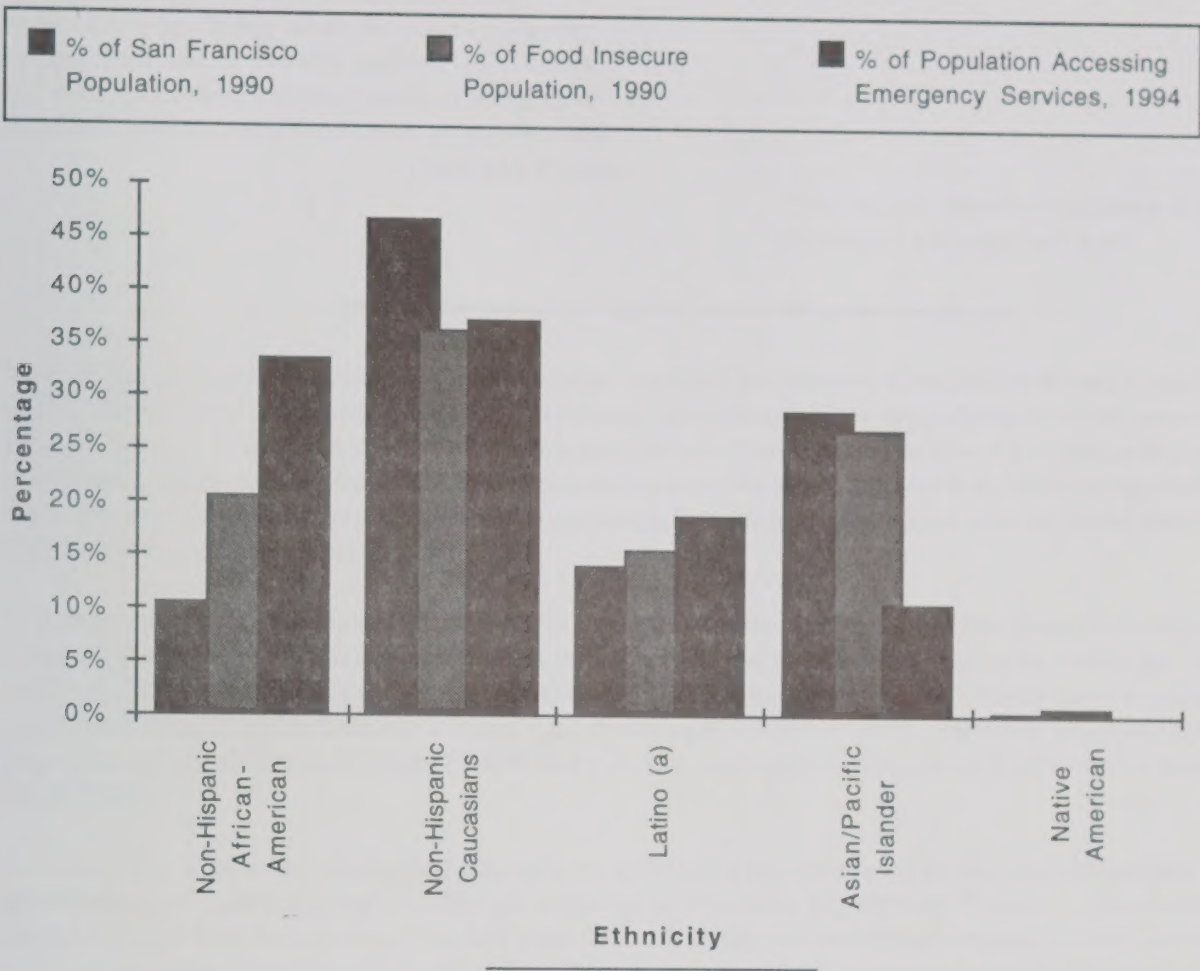
This study looked at the various San Francisco populations currently accessing food programs in the city. However, the demographic information provided in this section does not address clients who are not accessing services. Additionally, the data here refer to encounters rather than individuals. Nevertheless, a clear understanding of those who utilize services is vital to identifying those who may not. Information gathered in this study indicates that the need for food assistance is far greater than is available.

Children represent 45% of current food program participants in our study. Adult women represent 32% and adult men 23% of the clients. The ethnic demographics of persons currently receiving some food assistance in a given month are entirely out of proportion with each group's representation in the total population. A third of the clients accessing food programs are African-American. Other communities, such as Asian-Pacific Islanders and Native Americans, currently access programs in numbers less than their ratio of the populace. (See Comparative Demographics by Ethnicity chart, page 15).

Summary

While San Francisco has many programs serving individuals in need of food assistance, upon further inspection we see that these programs do not address current needs adequately or effectively. The present system can best be described as having breadth, but very little depth. The distribution of programs is not always related to the need, creating a burden on recipients. For many, getting enough to eat remains a "full-time job."

Comparative Demographics by Ethnicity



Source: 1990 U.S. Census STF3A and San Francisco Food Bank

1. The first part of the document is a title page. It contains the title of the document, the author's name, and the date of the document. The title is "The History of the United States" and the author is "John Adams". The date is "1776".

2. The second part of the document is a table of contents. It lists the chapters of the document and the page numbers where they begin. The chapters are "The Declaration of Independence", "The Constitution", "The Bill of Rights", "The Federalist Papers", and "The American Revolution". The page numbers are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively.

3. The third part of the document is a list of references. It lists the sources used in the document. The sources are "The Declaration of Independence", "The Constitution", "The Bill of Rights", "The Federalist Papers", and "The American Revolution".

4. The fourth part of the document is a list of footnotes. It lists the footnotes used in the document. The footnotes are "The Declaration of Independence", "The Constitution", "The Bill of Rights", "The Federalist Papers", and "The American Revolution".

CHAPTER IV: PUBLIC FOOD PROGRAMS

"I imagine there are more families than three to five years ago living below the poverty line due to high rents and concurrent cuts in AFDC levels. If it's a choice between paying rent or buying food, most will want to avoid the horrors of homelessness."

- Outreach Worker

"Food stamps should be accompanied by education." - Sunset resident

The previous chapter examined food resources operated by private, community-based organizations (CBOs) in San Francisco. Many government programs (primarily federal) exist to provide food assistance to those in need. The California-Nevada Community Action Association (Cal-Neva) produced a study earlier this year that serves as an excellent resource for information regarding these programs. Additional information regarding federal food programs was received from the California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA).

It is important to recognize that many of the food programs developed by the federal government were created to respond to issues other than hunger. These programs serve as an outlet for "agricultural production tied to price support and surplus removal programs. Others have evolved to meet basic health and education needs. And many seek to improve the nutrition of a specific population." (California-Nevada Community Action Association; *Hunger in California: A State of Need*; 1994)

Additionally, almost all food programs rely on a uniform poverty level to establish eligibility or distribution of state funding (\$14,764 for a family of four as of September 30, 1994). This level is unfair to high-cost living areas like San Francisco. A study released this summer by the General Accounting Office confirms this problem. The GAO estimates that the real cost of living in California is 112.3% of the current national poverty level. (Frontier; *GAO calls for Poverty Rate Adjustments*; Fall 1994)

Food Stamp Program (FSP)

The Food Stamp Program is the largest government feeding program. Nearly one in nine Americans receive Food Stamps. In San Francisco, the number of food stamp participants is approximately 50,000. The FSP is available to any household that meets certain requirements, primarily having to do with income and assets.

The FSP is the federal government's primary program dealing with the issue of hunger. It is based on a food-buying plan (the Thrifty Food Plan), which in theory should meet all the needs of a nutritionally balanced diet. In reality, many recipients find it impossible to make their Food Stamp allotment last for the entire month and often supplement this resource with food from other federal food programs and from private CBOs.

Some of the requirements to receive FSP assistance are:

- Only U.S. citizens and persons admitted for permanent residence are eligible.
- To qualify, a household must purchase and prepare food in common.
- All household members must have a Social Security number or apply for one.
- Households must have a gross income at or below 130% of federal poverty guidelines (\$1,555 per month for a family of four through September 1, 1994).
- Households may have no more than \$2,000 in allowable resources such as a bank account (\$3,000 if a household member is over age 60).
- Able-bodied adults must meet certain work requirements.

(Source: California-Nevada Community Action Association)

To determine the income that will be used to estimate benefits, certain deductions are allowed. There is a standard deduction of \$131, and an excess shelter deduction for shelter costs exceeding 50% of all other deductions to a maximum of \$200, among others. It is assumed that households will spend a portion of their income on food, thus the Food Stamp allotment is reduced to 30% of a household's net income.

Maximum allotments (given only to households with a zero net income) by household size are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • \$112 for one person | • \$535 for six persons |
| • \$206 for two persons | • \$595 for seven persons |
| • \$295 for three persons | • \$676 for eight persons |
| • \$375 for four persons | • \$85 for each additional person |
| • \$446 for five persons | (through September 30, 1994) |

Benefits decrease as income increases. Food Stamps may be used to purchase food for humans or to buy seeds and plants for use in home gardens to produce food. Food Stamps may not be used to purchase the following: alcohol, tobacco, hot foods, toiletries, paper goods, pet food, medicine or vitamins.

The FSP is a hugely complex program. The application for Food Stamps is long and intimidating. Hundreds of rules and regulations make the program difficult to administer; likewise it is difficult to be a participant. This is one of the major reasons why participation in the FSP is limited among those eligible. CFPA estimates that in San Francisco, only 60.3% of those persons eligible for the FSP actually sign up for the program.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

The Emergency Food Assistance Program was created to reduce government supplies of surplus dairy products. Originally intended as a temporary program, TEFAP was given funds in 1988 to begin purchasing food for distribution. TEFAP is administered federally by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), on the state level by the California Department of Social Services (DSS) and in San Francisco by the Economic Opportunity Council (EOC).

The program provides a small number of items that are distributed monthly to low-income families. These items include surplus foods (usually dairy products) and purchased foods. Eligibility is easy to determine. Usually only a few questions are required and income is often self-verified. Incomes must be below 130% of the federal poverty level. TEFAP is especially important to those individuals who are not eligible for Food Stamp participation, such as SSI recipients.

TEFAP accounted for 1,886,105 pounds of food distributed to 17,829 families (unduplicated) in San

Francisco in 1993. The value of this food is estimated to be \$1,361,160. (Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, Inc.)

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program providing low-cost meals to children in participating public and private schools. It is administered by the USDA at the national level and by the California Department of Education on the state level. Participating schools receive a supplemental reimbursement for each eligible meal served to a child from a low-income family. Eligibility is based on income. Children from families with an income of 130% of the poverty level can receive free meals. Children from families between 130% and 185% of poverty can receive reduced-price meals. Children from families making more than 185% of the poverty level must pay full price. The federal poverty level for a family of four as of September 30, 1994, was \$14,764. Participating schools must meet certain menu requirements to receive the price reduction. No school may charge more than 40¢ for a reduced-price meal. In addition to the supplemental payments, schools are eligible for surplus food commodities. Commodities account for approximately 20% of the meals.

The average daily number of free meals provided in schools in San Francisco is 19,150. Reduced-price meals account for 2,421, and full-price meals account for 2,397.

Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

WIC provides supplemental foods, nutrition education and health care to low-income pregnant, lactating and postpartum women; infants; and children to age 5 who are at risk of physical and mental health problems due to poor nutrition, inadequate health care, or both. The program is administered through the USDA nationally and, in California, through the Department of Health Services. California does not supplement federal money for the administrative and nutrition education costs.

Eligibility is based on incomes below 185% of the federal poverty rate, or participation in Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the Food Stamp Program or Medi-Cal. In addition, participants must be certified as being at-risk by a health professional. Participants generally receive one of 14 food packages, \$20 food purchase vouchers, immunizations, nutrition education and health care.

WIC maintains a priority list of eligibility categories. If funding is not available for all clients, higher priority categories are served first. Due to funding shortages in California, postpartum women, children over age 3 and others often have not been served. WIC participation in San Francisco is approximately 13,000 persons, or about 51.2% of those eligible. Participation breaks down almost evenly among women, infants and children.

School Breakfast Program (SBP)

The School Breakfast Program operates similarly to the School Lunch Program. The state provides supplemental reimbursements to the schools for each eligible meal served. The same income and menu requirements hold true.

Only about half of the state's schools participate in this program. In San Francisco, about 41.3% of eligible children participate in the program, much higher than the state's estimated 10% participation rate. The average daily number of free breakfast meals is 8,692. Reduced-price meals average 207, and full-price meals, 108.

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The Summer Food Service Program provides reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children in needy areas when school is not in session. Nationally the program is administered through the USDA, and the USDA regional office in San Francisco administers the state program. Eligible sponsors of the program are (in order of priority):

- public and private non-profit schools
- public and private non-profit residential summer camps
- units of local, city, county, state or tribal governments
- private non-profit organizations

Local sites may be qualified in places where at least 50% of the children under age 18 are eligible for free or reduced-price meals in the NSLP (185% of poverty), based on census data or school meal participation data. These sites are open sites; they do not require eligibility forms from participants. Enrolled sites, not meeting the above requirements may determine eligibility on a per child basis from applications. Most sites are limited to providing two meals per day. This program is the smallest school meal program operated. Non-profit organizations are greatly limited in operating this program by restrictions on the number of sites, the number of children and the type of meals that may be served.

In San Francisco, SFSP participation is approximately 24.7% of those eligible. The average daily meals served is a little more than 5,000.

Special Milk Program (SMP)

The SMP serves those schools not participating in the school meal programs. The schools receive 11¢ per half-pint of milk provided to low-income children. Local schools may do one of three things with this reimbursement. They may sell the milk to all children at reduced prices, provide milk free to low-income children or provide milk free to all children.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The CSFP provides food to low-income pregnant, postpartum and breast-feeding women; infants; children up to age 6; and the elderly. CSFP is administered nationally by the USDA and locally by the Economic Opportunity Council. San Francisco is one of only two counties in California that operate the program, the other being Orange County. Eligibility is based on income of 185% of poverty for women, infants and children; and 130% of poverty for elderly persons, 60 years of age or older. Participants in WIC are not eligible to participate in CSFP, which does not offer the medical care that WIC offers.

Participants receive one of several food packages depending on the household's situation. The food packages are primarily made up of commodities from the USDA.

CSFP distributed 66,506 food packages to 9,079 families with pregnant/postpartum women and children in 1993. The market value of the food is estimated at \$3,325,300. Additionally, CSFP distributed 36,611 food packages to 3,696 seniors 60 years of age and older with incomes under 130% of poverty. The market value is estimated as \$1,724,378. (Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, Inc.)

Nutrition Program for the Elderly

The Nutrition Program for the Elderly is part of the Older Americans Act of 1965 and receives commodities from the USDA. The program is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services. The California Department of Aging passes the funds through to local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). Congregate and home-delivered meals programs are operated by public and private agencies in senior or community centers. There is no income eligibility requirement. Participants must be 60 years of age or older. Spouses of recipients also may participate regardless of age. Meals provided must meet one-third of the recommended daily requirements of a nutritious diet. Participants are often asked to make a donation for the meal. There are more than 40 senior meal sites in San Francisco.

Other Programs

In addition to the programs listed above, several programs exist to provide commodities to government or non-profit organizations and CBOs. The commodities from these programs are used to prepare meals or run distribution programs at the local level. There are also several nutrition education programs available to low income persons, such as Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Project (EFNEP). Additional financial support for low-income persons may come from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and General Assistance Programs.

Summary

As noted, many programs do exist to provide food for those in need. However, there is no overall food policy at any of the federal, state or local levels. In fact, programs were often developed for reasons other than meeting the needs of the hungry. Programs are fragmented and often difficult to understand and access. Only a portion of a nutritional diet may be met in any one of these programs.

CHAPTER V: SPECIAL NEEDS AND POPULATION GROUPS

*"Today it's the working class [that's hungry]- the new poor.
Five years ago they were working and secure.
They never thought they'd be on welfare."*

- Outreach worker

*"For an 85-year-old who lives on \$600 a month,
there will be no more money for her, but rent,
medicine, utilities, etcetera, will go up. It doesn't
leave much for food."*

- Food program director

*"I spend too much time getting food to have energy,
and time is taken away from looking for work,"*

- Central City resident

*"One immigrant said she came [to the United States]
because someone who owned a bakery sponsored her.
All she had to eat was buns and bread."*

- Immigration outreach worker

*"[Necesito] trabajo, educacion para mis hijos y
un salario que nos alcance para vivir." (I need work, education
for my children and a salary with which we can live on)* - Mission district resident

San Francisco is a community of communities. The old definition of community as a geographic place no longer holds true. Communities can be defined by any one—or a combination—of these elements: ethnicity, income level, interest, needs, neighborhood and language. The problem of hunger cuts across all social, economic and cultural lines. No single approach or outreach methodology is sufficient for ensuring access to food programs, which is why grassroots organizations exist throughout the city, attempting to meet the needs of these disparate groups.

To address the problem of chronic hunger in San Francisco, the unique concerns of each neighborhood and group must be considered and addressed. Through a series of focus groups, informant interviews and community meetings, this study of hunger identified a series of population groups with special needs and concerns relative to food security and hunger. Following are some examples of the special circumstances and needs noted in this study:

Mothers on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children)

For many receiving AFDC benefits, deciding which bill gets paid and which does not is a regular task. Utility fees, rent, child expenses and transportation costs use up most, if not all, of the money received as assistance. Many AFDC parents spoke of extraordinary efforts to make their money last. Some work odd jobs on the side to make ends meet. Foods that are inexpensive are often nutritionally poor in quality. Personal hygiene items are particularly expensive and are not covered in benefits packages. Events that would seem commonplace, such as birthday parties and dinner guests, are nearly impossible for many. There are no extras.

The cost of entertaining their children has grown considerably as fear of violence keeps many away from parks and playgrounds. Summer is especially difficult when children are home. Few participate in school lunch programs and have the additional cost of feeding growing children when school is out.

It is difficult to access food assistance and other programs for many. Services are unavailable in many neighborhoods, and it is difficult to travel with small children. Many also cited the assistance system as difficult and confusing to negotiate. They felt their case workers did not have useful information about public and private assistance programs. Some felt that welfare kept them from getting ahead.

Approximately 38,000 persons participate in AFDC in San Francisco.

Food Stamp Recipients

While most Food Stamp recipients found the program to be useful, many felt the benefits were too low and unrealistic. For many, food simply is not the budget priority each month. Many of these people are struggling to pay rent and utilities. The money left over, and the Food Stamp allotment, is generally seen as insufficient. Other resources are easier to attain. These resources include food from family members, food pantries and commodity programs and hot meals from on-site meal programs.

In neighborhoods with large numbers of individuals living in SROs, Food Stamps are often of limited use. Recipients would like to purchase hot foods with the Food Stamps because they lack cooking facilities.

For many others who do not use Food Stamps, but are eligible, the system seems confusing and increasingly difficult. Many receive inaccurate information regarding the program from a variety of sources. The most common information resource named is "the streets."

In San Francisco, approximately 50,000 persons participate in the FSP, about 60% of those eligible.

Homeless Persons and Families

Homeless individuals described long lines, travel time and appropriate foods as their primary problems accessing food programs. Several stated that it was necessary to arrive at 8 AM for an 11 AM meal. Many described a "dehumanizing" process and felt they were herded like cattle to poor quality food. There is a great deal of stigma attached to homelessness. Very few programs exist for families and individuals that need every meal, every day. Those that do exist are overcrowded and uncomfortable. Though these programs are often described as "emergency" food sites, they are de facto serving those in regular or daily need.

Government assistance and Food Stamps are inadequate to meet the daily needs of these individuals. Additionally, a number of homeless individuals also have substance abuse problems. Any money received is often long gone before the end of the month.

The Homebound

This study interviewed providers of homebound food services to examine the special needs of this population.

Nutrition is a key concern for those suffering from illnesses and others in need of homebound services. For these programs (such as Project Open Hand for HIV-positive individuals and Meals on Wheels for the homebound elderly) early intervention and the provision of essential nutritional resources, including nutritional counseling, are paramount. These long-term programs have much better success at early intervention than programs doing emergency medical or social service visits.

Many people living alone lack any sort of support network to assist in meeting nutritional needs. For some, asking for help is difficult and shameful. By the time these clients access meal services,

they are typically "at the end of their rope." They may have let the house go, the utilities lapse, until finally food becomes an immediate crisis. Often, providers walk in on a multitude of client problems aside from food and hunger needs. Delivered meals are really the dividing line between home and hospitalization for the clients receiving services. The services at times must function in a reactive rather than proactive manner.

For many low-income individuals, services have been reduced. While programs serving specific populations continue to increase service numbers, there is a lack of programs for many homebound individuals. Food Stamps are no longer delivered to the home. Brokered case management programs have been cut. Regular caregivers and assistants are unavailable or unaffordable. Neighborhoods such as Bayview/Hunters Point and Sunset/Richmond are underserved. Women with breast cancer have limited access to home-delivered meals when they are needed.

Most of the programs delivering home meals do not deliver 100% of the nutritional needs of their clients. Yet, for many homebound, this is the extent of their food. Home-delivery agencies are near or have surpassed their capacity. Many service providers felt there were significant numbers who needed the services and could not or did not receive them.

Immigrants

Asian/Pacific Islander immigrant communities are most visible in Chinatown and in the Sunset/Richmond neighborhoods, though significant numbers exist in other neighborhoods in the city. The Chinese population is centered in Chinatown and the Sunset/Richmond Districts; the Vietnamese cluster in the north of Market area; Filipinos in the Excelsior District. Newly arrived immigrants often find acculturation is a great problem. For many, one meal a day was the norm in the culture they just left. Quite a few of these individuals experience nutrition-related illnesses. For many, family members already living in San Francisco provide initial assistance. However, this assistance must end as soon as the individual qualifies for government assistance or becomes employed.

Hispanic or Latino immigrant communities are most visible in the Mission and Outer Mission districts, but they also live in many other neighborhoods in the city. Many of these individuals receive support from church and community-based organizations.

For both Asian and Hispanic groups, employment and language are major concerns. Many live in crowded households to save on money. There is a significant amount of fear regarding the government. Opportunities for participation in public programs are limited or nonexistent. Outreach within these communities can be difficult and is not easily resolved with one or two approaches. These communities are actually made up of many smaller communities that may have little in common. For example, an Asian community may include several cultures and languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

Older Adults (not homebound)

For this population, affordability of food when living on a fixed income, safety and mobility are significant issues relating to food security. Many reported that they are afraid to leave their homes to go to the grocery store. Some in this group also find it difficult to motivate themselves to prepare a meal for one.

Senior programs are widespread in San Francisco, with meal distribution in every neighborhood. However, state studies indicate that utilization among low income seniors is sparse in these programs. Menus often are not culturally appropriate. Funding from the Older Americans Act is shifting from these congregate meal sites to home-delivered meals as our population grows older.

The concern is that low-income seniors without significant medical or mobility problems will face reduced services over the coming years.

Infants, Children and Youth

Many programs exist to assist in meeting the nutritional needs of this population (see Chapter III). Unfortunately, for many reasons, participation in these programs is low. School lunch and breakfast programs face problems in participation because of the stigma of identifying oneself as low income in front of peers. Older youth also tend to experience great pressure to eat less-than-adequate meals in fast food and snack facilities. The School Lunch Program has an average daily meal rate of little more than 19,000. The School Breakfast Program provides approximately 9,000 meals.

Programs for infants and children, such as WIC and CSFP, often lack funds to provide for everyone who is eligible. While there has been a recent push for full funding of WIC, many still are not receiving the valuable medical and nutritional assistance necessary. WIC participation is estimated at about 51% of those eligible in San Francisco.

Summary

Hunger is a problem that spreads across nearly all communities of the city. No single approach will meet the needs of all. As policy and program development occurs, the needs of various constituents must be considered.

CHAPTER VI: SYSTEM ISSUES IN FOOD ASSISTANCE

"Throw out prohibitive laws against emergency food providers. The government should work with them, not against them."

- Soup kitchen director

"Three weeks out of the month, hunger isn't a problem." - Soup kitchen guest

"Unless there's a significant injection of new funds into programs feeding people, [hunger] will become significantly worse." - Food program director

"The city really doesn't have much of a system to deal with hunger. In city funding, the first to go is always food and social systems." - Public health nutritionist

San Francisco is fortunate to have a diversity of organizations providing food and serving meals to hungry individuals and families. This chapter discusses systems and program issues affecting emergency and other food providers in the private, non-profit sector in San Francisco. Nearly 500 meals, food and commodity programs now operate within the city, yet the evidence from this study clearly indicates that the problem of hunger is getting worse, not better. Why is this so?

Food assistance resources in San Francisco can be characterized as having breadth (many programs serving many different populations and neighborhoods), but very little depth (limited capacity to respond to growing hunger needs). Of the nearly 500 agencies providing food, meals and/or commodities in San Francisco, fewer than 25% are available on a daily basis to provide emergency food assistance and most of these have met or exceeded their capacities to serve hungry clients. Thus, a snapshot of food assistance resources (particularly emergency food) in San Francisco is deceptive. While there is a large number of caring and committed providers, their limited resources fall far short of meeting the needs of the city's 90,000-plus food-insecure individuals and families at highest risk of hunger.

This study identified a number of challenges facing food assistance providers which must be addressed in order to increase the overall level of food resources, realign the balance between emergency and long-term food assistance and maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of food resources for hungry people in San Francisco. Among the most significant of these challenges are:

- **Many providers have reached or exceeded their capacities**

The majority of food sources in San Francisco have reached (and in many cases exceeded) their capacities to serve hungry people because of limited resources and continuing high levels of need. More than four-fifths (87%) of food assistance providers offer service to a limited number of existing clients and are unable to accept client referrals. The result of this resource shortage is a radically shrunk pool of available emergency (and other) food resources, making it far more difficult for hungry individuals and families to locate the food assistance they need.

- **Increasing program restrictions**

Facing growing needs and limited food and financial resources, increasing numbers of food and meals providers are establishing or tightening their eligibility and/or service policies. In more and more situations, providers have had to: limit or reduce the amount of food assistance provided to clients; limit the number of times clients can obtain food; and/or limit the number of needy persons they serve by closing their caseloads or tightening their eligibility parameters.

Increasingly, case managers and other providers are experiencing situations where there is simply no help available for hungry persons except long lines at soup kitchens and meal sites.

- **Uncoordinated funding streams**

The almost bewildering complexity of the food assistance sector in San Francisco is in part the predictable extension of multiple, uncoordinated streams of funding and other support (such as surplus commodities). With many sources of public and private funding, each with a unique set of program requirements and restrictions, integrating individual food assistance programs into some form of a rational "system" is especially challenging, while all the more necessary.

- **Few connections and communications among food assistance providers**

There are few formal linkages among the nearly 500 food assistance providers in San Francisco. This complicates the client referral process and forces hungry persons to spend a considerable amount of time locating and obtaining food or meals. Fragmentation leads to inefficiencies and service gaps which impede the overall response to hunger. There is a similar problem with inter-provider communications. Currently, many providers are unaware of other food resources in the city, limiting their ability to respond to clients' needs. Improving communications among providers represents a critical first step in creating opportunities for stronger organizational linkages and more collaboration.

- **Duplication in some food assistance functions**

With few formal relationships and limited communication within the emergency food sector in San Francisco, it is not surprising to learn about duplication in efforts among providers. The large number of individual organizations providing complementary food assistance services results in some administrative cost inefficiencies. Certain duplicated functions (such as food solicitation, fund raising, client case management, food banking) need to be better coordinated or consolidated in order to make the most of limited food and financial resources for hungry persons in San Francisco.

These challenges are not unique to food providers or to San Francisco. They exist in every community and in many fields of service. In San Francisco's food assistance sector, a number of factors were identified in this study which begin to explain the nature of (and possible solutions to) these continuing system-level challenges.

- **Lack of a systems perspective in the food assistance sector**

Each of the nearly 500 providers of food, meals and commodities in San Francisco is pursuing a heartfelt helping mission for those in desperate or difficult circumstances. Often, these organizations are working at narrowly defined purposes, and there is no group or mechanism that places each of these community food resources into a broader systems-level perspective. This limitation creates (and is the result of) inadequate communication, as well as the fragmentation and duplication of some functions. Any meaningful efforts to address hunger will be more effective if each of the resources is integrated into a larger, more focused and coordinated food assistance system.

- **Food as a secondary focus**

Approximately half of San Francisco's providers of food assistance do so as an adjunct to their primary service (e.g. meals in a residential treatment facility). Often, these organizations do not identify themselves within the food assistance sector despite the fact that they represent half of all food assistance organizations in the city. This situation makes a systems focus more complicated and limits opportunities for collaboration.

- **Hunger can be invisible**

Some people who are hungry also experience other problems and needs. A portion of these individuals and families are fortunate to obtain the assistance of one of a number of multi-purpose social services agencies, public and private, in San Francisco. These agencies are mostly long-term providers to poor and otherwise disenfranchised populations. While they respond to a wide array of problems and needs, the issue of hunger is too often not addressed. This can result in a critical unmet need for the client, reducing the probability of successfully resolving other problems. Including food and hunger issues within a comprehensive client assessment and treatment plan would increase the likelihood of a successful intervention by addressing the common root causes of hunger and other problems.

- **Short-term versus long-term focus**

Food programs and other social service agencies in San Francisco focus principally on emergency responses to client needs. The existing food sector in San Francisco allocates a large share of its resources to respond to emergencies, many of which are actually chronic and persistent needs affecting the same individuals and families. While hunger has become largely a chronic problem, food assistance is mainly based on the crisis model. With such a misalignment—due to organizational cutbacks resulting from budget limitations and cuts in “safety net” social services—there is little likelihood of making a significant, long-term improvement in the city’s hunger problem.

- **Empowerment versus dependency**

This is an emotionally and politically charged issue having to do with the nature and persistence of poverty (and therefore hunger) in our modern society. In this study, hungry people, providers, advocates, educators, community leaders and public officials were in agreement that the current welfare and social service programs (including much of the food assistance sector) do not operate in a manner that empowers clients to achieve meaningful, long-lasting changes in their lives. Instead, opportunities for self-improvement have waned steadily in the past decade or more, leaving poor individuals and families with few options except long-term dependency. This situation is partially the cause of the persistent hunger problem in San Francisco.

Summary

Individuals and organizations with unique perspectives on hunger and poverty in San Francisco agree that these larger system and policy issues constrain the ability of food providers and other organizations to respond effectively to the needs of their clients. Any realistic solution to hunger will need to be planned and implemented at the service, system and policy levels. This, in turn, will require: 1) a higher level of hunger awareness; 2) more visible community and political leadership; 3) openness to change and new approaches to community-level problem-solving; and 4) a realignment of resources and programs serving poor individuals and families.

CHAPTER VII: NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"All agencies should come together and have quarterly meetings. Anyone issuing food should join this coalition and also work on policy changes."

- Department of Public Health official

"There needs to be greater public awareness that people who are hungry or ill have to be cared for—for the eventual well-being of everyone. It's just not good business for people to be hungry or ill." - Outreach worker

Next Steps: Implementation

A principal aim of this study is to increase community awareness of hunger and to mobilize existing and new resources to steadily reduce the number of individuals and families who do not have enough to eat. With more than 90,000 hungry persons in San Francisco every month, and with another 60,000 at serious risk of hunger, the magnitude and complexity of the problem is truly daunting. The need for greater action is long overdue.

The challenge of responding effectively to the problem of hunger in San Francisco is complicated further by the seeming invisibility of the issue. This study discovered a large number of "hidden hungry," those individuals and families in every neighborhood whose problems with getting enough to eat do not come to public attention in lines for free meals or other visible venues. Without more awareness of the hunger problem and its consequences, a truly effective, long-term solution for San Francisco is not likely to be found.

More work also is needed to expand the level of food resources in San Francisco and to make them function more effectively as a system of service. This will require a far higher level of information-sharing and collaboration than has been the case in the food assistance sector in San Francisco to date. More visibility for the hunger problem and more public leadership must be part of a comprehensive approach. This, in turn, requires a city-wide commitment to eradicating hunger and poverty, as well as a willingness to seek new solutions that truly break the cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement.

The food assistance needs identified in this study are compelling, persistent and challenging. Perhaps these findings will serve as a call to action for San Francisco's community and religious leaders, elected officials, providers, funders and advocates to give a high priority to reducing the level of hunger in our city.

Recommendations

This study generated a wealth of information about the causes and consequences of hunger and the limitations of current food assistance resources in San Francisco. Based on these findings, the following series of recommendations is made to begin the process of mobilizing focused, collaborative action in San Francisco to expand and improve existing food resources and develop new ones.

These recommendations reflect the reality, identified in the study's interviews and focus groups, that few new resources will be available to address hunger and poverty in the foreseeable future. Thus, the solutions identified here generally do not require a significant infusion of new resources. They do involve a rethinking of the nature of hunger and a redeployment of some current funding,

services and other food assistance resources. They also include some leadership recommendations to increase the prominence of the hunger problem in public policy-making and within the advocacy agendas of key constituencies. Omitted from these recommendations are issues related to federal food assistance, income maintenance and poverty programs. Expanding resources to fight poverty is the surest means of preventing and reducing hunger. Excellent research by a number of groups (such as California Food Policy Advocates, The Food Resource Action Council and the California-Nevada Community Action Council) details the many changes needed to address hunger by reducing poverty.

Leadership and Awareness

1. Increase public awareness of hunger as a community-wide problem.

The purpose of heightened public awareness is to build a strong and sustained commitment for innovative, long-term interventions that would truly reduce the prevalence of hunger in San Francisco. Another important audience is those staff and volunteers whose decisions affect food assistance funding. It is critical that staff at FEMA, members of the Ryan White CARE Act planning group, United Way volunteers and others understand more about San Francisco's hunger problem and the unique circumstances (such as high cost of living) that require higher levels of resources and more creative, long-term solutions.

2. Elevate the priority given to food and hunger issues by a broad base of constituencies and interests.

In order to build a solid constituency around hunger, reach out to a host of policy and advocacy groups including: children, women, disabled and elder advocates; health, mental health and substance abuse treatment advocates; the anti-poverty community; the religious community; the education sector; HIV/AIDS advocates; and many others. This would greatly amplify the level of awareness, interest and political clout behind the hunger issue.

3. The city of San Francisco should develop a comprehensive hunger policy that would coordinate all funding and spending to ensure the equitable distribution of resources based on need.

The recommendations of this study are designed to move San Francisco toward a more comprehensive, outcome-focused strategy regarding hunger. Most of the solutions recommended here involve few new resources. The elected officials of San Francisco, too often silent about the problem of hunger, must take bold and visible leadership with the strong support of the food assistance sector.

Systems and Services

4. Strengthen relationships between emergency food providers and long-term supportive services for hungry individuals and families.

Hunger has turned into a chronic personal and social problem, yet resources (programs, services, funding) remain primarily oriented toward emergency, short-term assistance. If hunger is a presenting problem of poverty and other needs, better referral and case management strategies (and higher levels of supportive services) are needed to help the client toward increased self-sufficiency.

5. Prioritize the allocation of emergency and other food programs and services in San Francisco's neighborhoods based on hunger prevalence and other indicators of need.

This would better link food assistance with the prevalence of hunger and bring need-based equity into the allocation of emergency and other food resources. It also would improve the effectiveness of the existing array of programs and services by linking them more directly to areas and population groups with the greatest needs.

6. Encourage greater collaboration and, where appropriate, consolidation within the food assistance sector in San Francisco.

This would increase the fiscal stability and the effectiveness of individual providers while improving the impact of the city's food assistance sector overall. In any effort to consolidate, care must be taken to ensure the continued operation of those organizations with unique resources and connections to particular communities and populations of need.

7. Expand outreach and education efforts designed to enroll more eligible individuals in federal food assistance programs.

Increasing the participation of eligible hungry persons in the Food Stamp, WIC, school meals and other programs would help to reduce hunger, bringing in new federal entitlement resources to assist those in need.

8. Eliminate duplication in specific functions among food assistance providers.

This study found that duplication in some functions exists among food assistance providers. There are opportunities for reducing duplication in direct client services, food solicitation, food warehousing, food and meal distribution, fund raising, client assessments, home meal delivery and other functions. This would increase the efficiency of current food resources while providing an opportunity to construct a more rational system of food assistance in San Francisco. Cooperation and collaboration are essential for this recommendation to be successfully implemented.

9. Develop a mechanism to improve program-related communications and operations among food assistance providers; implement new strategies to increase the cost effectiveness of food purchasing and soliciting among providers.

Currently, food-providing organizations have few information links and this makes it difficult to direct clients to the specific types of assistance they need. With many providers unable to accept new client referrals, better communication is needed to improve the overall responsiveness of food assistance resources in San Francisco. The San Francisco Food Bank and FoodNet both have taken important first steps in facilitating communications between food distributing agencies.

Currently, bulk purchasing among food assistance providers takes place on a limited basis. More savings can be realized through expanded bulk purchasing arrangements which would help stretch existing food resources for participating providers. Similarly, consolidating efforts at "food-raising" will increase the efficiency and yield of this important function.

10. Strengthen the information and referral (I&R) system to respond to hunger-related needs.

The United Way Helpline is an essential component of the food assistance sector in San Francisco. Every effort needs to be made to provide the Helpline with comprehensive, timely and accurate information about available food resources; to expand outreach; and to ensure the continued operation and stability of the Helpline.

11. Assist neighborhood groups by connecting them to available resources to empower communities in making local responses to need in their districts.

Currently, people living in neighborhoods like Bayview/Hunters Point have few resources for purchasing high quality, affordable food. Local groups in these neighborhoods are interested in learning how to bring farmer's markets and other affordable food resources into their districts.

Private non-profit organizations, advocacy groups and government programs such as the Mayor's Office of Community Development can work with these groups to address these concerns.

12. Expand eligibility criteria to a broader constituency of clients, including the working poor and other at-risk groups, to ensure these groups can receive income maintenance, food and other assistance, before reaching levels of stark need.

The working poor are at high risk of hunger, yet few programs target this growing San Francisco population. Unemployment, low wages and high living costs threaten these individuals and families with hunger, malnutrition, illness and homelessness. Providing working poor families with food and other support (child care, accessible health care and job training are examples) could help prevent hunger and its related problems for this at-risk population group.

13. Develop programs to provide budgeting and nutrition information to hungry and at-risk individuals and families.

Living on a limited income in San Francisco is truly challenging and some persons need help acquiring basic budgeting skills and/or nutrition information. This knowledge and these skills are essential for those trying to feed themselves and their families and could over time help low-income individuals prevent hunger, malnutrition and their destructive consequences. Public access communications represent one promising vehicle for delivering these ancillary services, but a range of approaches will be needed in order to respond to the circumstances of individual clients. The San Francisco Food Bank is taking a step in this direction with implementation of its Full Plate Program.

Summary

These next steps and recommendations are targeted toward food providers, public officials, community leaders, businesses, funders and advocates. They represent a challenge to us all: to reduce the level of hunger in San Francisco. The degree to which we respond is a good measure of our commitment to the well-being of our residents and our community.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

This community study of hunger was designed and implemented around four key information needs:

- To develop a defensible estimate of the extent of food insecurity and hunger risk among residents of San Francisco.
- To better understand the experience of hunger from the perspective of hungry persons and families in San Francisco.
- To provide a comprehensive inventory and assessment of the current food assistance resources within San Francisco.
- To identify issues within the existing food assistance network in San Francisco where improvements would result in better, more efficient service to hungry individuals and families.

Overview of the Research Design for the Hunger Study

In order to meet these expectations, a multi-dimensional study design was developed which includes primary and secondary data, as well as multiple qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. The intent of this approach was to ensure that the hunger study would be conducted in a methodologically sound manner within the constraints imposed by a limited budget and time frame. Given the inclusive and thoughtful approach taken in the collection of data for this study, we are confident in the study's findings and the conclusions drawn from them.

As noted above, this study of hunger in San Francisco utilized both existing (secondary) and newly collected (primary) data. The research design strategy was to make use of any salient and reliable information that responded to one or more of the information needs listed above. Where information was unavailable, incomplete or unreliable, specific (primary) data collection methods were used. Each of the specific methods and data sources used in the hunger study are described below.

Use of Secondary Data

The research design for the hunger study made extensive use of two sets of existing data: San Francisco data from the 1990 U.S. Census (for the estimates of food insecurity and hunger risk); and the agency database maintained by the San Francisco Food Bank (to quantify the existing food assistance level).

Several groups and researchers have developed complex formulas for estimating hunger risk in specific populations (most often infants, children, pregnant women and new mothers), but no reliable estimation methods have yet been validated for an entire community. Similarly, epidemiological models exist to estimate levels of malnutrition (not hunger) in selected subpopulations, but these are not helpful in a community-wide context.

Thus, the estimates of food insecurity and hunger risk presented in this study are based on poverty data from the 1990 U.S. Census (STF 3A), reflecting income information for 1989. Use of the federal poverty level as a proxy measure for estimating the number of food-insecure persons at high risk of hunger is appropriate for San Francisco, given the comparatively high cost of living in the Bay Area compared to national averages.

Federal Poverty Levels in 1990 U.S. Census

1 Person	\$ 5,980
2 Persons	\$ 8,020
3 Persons	\$10,080
4 Persons	\$12,100
5 Persons	\$14,140
6 Persons	\$16,180
7 Persons	\$18,220
8 Persons	\$20,260

Because the federal poverty level is calculated on living costs nationally, it underrepresents the true level of poverty in high-cost urban areas, including San Francisco. Also, the documented undercount of homeless persons, ethnic minorities and some others in the lower economic levels also underrepresents the city's true poverty (and hunger risk) situation. Because of these factors, several national and local researchers interviewed prior to this study felt that the federal poverty level would generate a conservative and defensible estimate of food insecurity and hunger risk (90,019 persons) in San Francisco. This study elected to use this simple and conservative estimating technique in order to be certain that the projected numbers of hungry persons in San Francisco can be agreed upon (as a minimum estimate) by providers, advocates, community leaders and local officials.

This study estimated the number of San Franciscans at secondary risk for food insecurity and hunger using the same U.S. Census data. That portion of the population reporting incomes between 100% and 150% of the federal poverty level was considered to be at secondary risk. Again, high living costs in San Francisco compared to the national poverty level make this estimate (60,634) a conservative one.

Data from the 1990 U.S. Census does not reflect the significant downturn in the local economy, which began in the early part of the decade. Unemployment and poverty rates have increased, along with caseloads in welfare and other social service programs. By all accounts, the observed number of homeless persons has increased steadily since the last census. Once again, these factors increase the number of individuals and families experiencing food insecurity and a high risk of hunger and make the estimates presented in this report even more conservative, and therefore defensible.

The second source of existing data used in this hunger study was the food resource database maintained by the San Francisco Food Bank. This source of information is updated annually and includes information about more than 400 groups and organizations providing some form of food assistance in San Francisco. To ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data from this source, members of the study's community advisory committee reviewed the listings, adding unlisted providers. The result is an information resource which is the most complete ever assembled on food assistance resources in San Francisco.

Use of Primary Data

In order to produce a comprehensive picture of hunger and food assistance resources in San Francisco, the study design included several primary data collection methods. These were used to describe the problem of hunger and the individuals and families it affects; to assess the level and distribution of food assistance resources; and to examine issues associated with the delivery of food

to those in need.

Structured key informant interviews were conducted with 24 individuals representing a diversity of opinions, perspectives and experiences relative to hunger and food assistance programs. Individuals interviewed included providers, advocates, policy-makers and individuals who had experienced poverty and hunger during their lives. This initial data collection effort provided critical community context for understanding hunger and helped to focus subsequent primary data collection for this study.

Using the exhaustive listing in the database of the San Francisco Food Bank, an agency survey was mailed to 475 food assistance providers in San Francisco. Follow-up calls to initial non-respondents were made. A total of 103 surveys was returned. Comparable program data for an additional 275 food assistance providers from 1993 was merged, where appropriate, with 1994 survey data to create a database incorporating approximately 80% of the food assistance resources in San Francisco. The data from these sources provided important insights into the level and limitations of existing food assistance resources and the problems experienced by providers as they seek to serve increasing numbers of hungry individuals and families in San Francisco.

In order to obtain information directly from those affected by hunger in San Francisco, four community meetings were held in the Bayview/Hunters Point, Mission, Richmond/Sunset and Tenderloin neighborhoods. Outreach for these meetings was extensive, conducted in collaboration with a local co-sponsoring agency. Multiple language outreach (in English, Spanish and Chinese) and on-site translation helped to ensure that individuals who do not speak English were included in a meaningful way and that their experiences informed the analysis and conclusions of this study. Total participation in the four community meetings was approximately 75 individuals, more than half of whom experience chronic hunger problems. The remaining participants were service providers and advocates.

Once again in collaboration with community-based agencies, a series of seven focus groups was conducted with specific target populations, based on status or need. These groups were:

- recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC);
- refugees and immigrants (Spanish-speaking);
- homebound persons (conducted with in-home providers);
- older adults (well and frail);
- homeless (including homeless veterans);
- working poor, and
- Chinatown residents (conducted with service providers).

A total of 92 individuals participated in the focus groups, providing in-depth personal and professional perspectives on hunger, unmet needs, systems issues and the particular problems experienced by specific population groups.

In order to ensure that this study of hunger cast a wide net in its data collection, a community response form was developed in English and Spanish. This six-question form was distributed at community meetings, focus groups and through the study's advisory committee to any individuals who wished to offer their perspectives on hunger. This was clearly a non-random, unscientific sample, but the information received from 238 forms (in English and Spanish) provided useful anecdotal (and very personal) information about the effects of hunger on individuals and families in San Francisco.

APPENDIX B: NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILES AND MAPS

The following neighborhood profiles were culled from community meetings and focus groups.

Mission

Hunger is more visible in the Mission than in some other districts. The homeless and the panhandler are more commonly seen. The effects of hunger are apparent in the schools and daycare programs in this neighborhood. Significant numbers of immigrants and refugees reside in this district. Since benefits do not provide adequate support, many utilize church and community programs for assistance. Pantries and food distribution programs are overextended; they run out of food before they run out of clients.

Special food needs are difficult to attain. The homeless often receive food boxes that require cooking, rendering them unusable. Culturally appropriate foods are almost nonexistent for those in need of emergency food. Access to available food is difficult. Programs are decentralized and fragmented. The fear of violence and crime often keeps people away from services

Sunset/Richmond

Hunger is a private problem in the Sunset/Richmond communities. Many of those who are in need of assistance are reluctant to acknowledge their need. An even greater number do not know how to get the help they need. Information about existing programs is not likely to be available on the street, as it is in other neighborhoods.

Outreach in this community is especially difficult. Stigma, language and transportation are all challenges to providers. Increasing numbers of immigrants are moving into these neighborhoods. For many of these individuals, fear of government programs and lack of contact are primary concerns. Many receive information from their children. Additionally, many of those in need are elderly or disabled and unable to leave their homes to get help from assistance programs. The populations primarily identified as needing food assistance are immigrants, refugees, children, elders, the homeless and the working poor.

Chinatown

The elderly, immigrants, those in transition between programs and the working poor are those identified as hungry in this community. Elderly and homebound people with limited cooking and storage facilities suffer the most. The definition of hunger is different for many of those individuals. Many feel that one meal a day is adequate if that is all that can be afforded. Eventually, significant numbers end up dehydrated or hospitalized for other nutritionally related illnesses. The most difficult group to serve in this district is the young elderly, those in their 50s and 60s who cannot find work and do not qualify for many programs. It is also common for the marginally poor, those making just enough to be disqualified for benefits, to do without adequate amounts of food.

Long-term help appears to be more readily available in Chinatown, but emergency services are few and difficult to access. "We need more 'hard' services, and a little less counseling. We need food and housing," said one respondent. The food that is distributed in the area is not culturally relevant and subsequently there is quite a bit of waste. "They wait in lines for a very long time for food that they can't use," one person noted. For immigrants, the acculturation process adds to these problems. Many find it difficult to acknowledge the need for assistance and see it as a failure of their dreams for success in a new country. For most, the assistance first comes from family members who already live here. That assistance ends when government assistance is available.

Central City (North/South of Market Street)

Hunger and poverty are highly visible in the Central City. Large soup kitchens and pantries exist for food distribution. Yet many of these residents felt frustrated by the long lines, "red tape" and access problems for the disabled. The Tenderloin is the central resource for hungry people throughout the city. Substance abuse and mental health dysfunction compound the problems of access and safety in food programs. For some, money goes first to the addiction, then to the purchase of food.

Significant numbers would prefer to prepare their own meals but live in single-room-occupancy units (SROs) and are unable to cook there. "I can only bring so many sodas to my room," said one SRO resident. Individuals living in SROs are unable to utilize food cooperative programs or Food Stamps so that they could buy the kinds of hot meals they are unable to prepare in their own homes. Large numbers of disabled, ill and elderly individuals live in SROs and have limited ability to receive food. Several residents spoke of seeing people die in these units from lack of food.

As in other neighborhoods, benefits do not go far enough toward meeting the cost of living. Many also feel that the "system" is structured in ways that maintain one's dependence on assistance. "Job training should be given away, as much as food," asserted one interviewee. The amount of time required to travel to a soup kitchen, wait in line and eat two or three meals a day makes participation in assistance self-help programs and job hunting impossible.

Another concern noted in this district is a perceived hardness on the part of providers. "They're getting burned out," was a common refrain. Also, lack of information about nutrition and economical food purchasing was identified.

Bayview/Hunters Point

Hunger in Bayview/Hunters Point is described as a hidden problem. It is rare for a person seeking services to identify himself or herself as hungry. Lack of food is seen as a direct result of low income. The length of a food line is the primary indicator of severe or chronic hunger in this neighborhood. Increasingly, food lines are filled with those holding jobs. As one resident of Bayview stated, "Instead of those on welfare or the homeless, a lot more of the 'regular people' are looking for help eating." For many, the choice is whether to pay the rent or buy food.

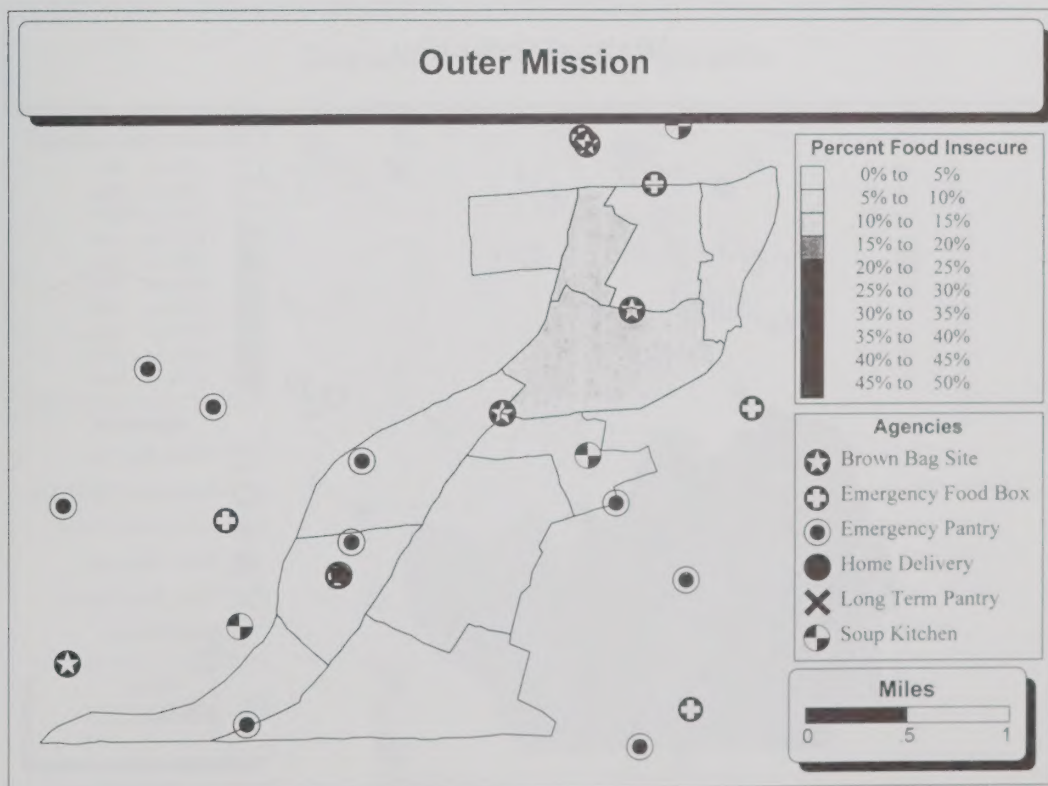
Providers, service consumers and residents all cited increases in housing, utility and food costs as the primary reasons for the increase in family food shortages over the last five years. Welfare benefits simply do not cover the cost of living. The benefits that are available have been reduced. In the view of many, the current system of assistance is not geared toward individuals who want to become self-sufficient.

Those who are working feel that income has not kept up with expenses. Additionally, access to good quality, reasonably priced food is spotty at best. Product availability in this neighborhood is poor. It is widely held that prices are higher and quality is worse in this district than other city neighborhoods. Many lack transportation resources or time to travel to other parts of the city to shop. Bulk purchasing is not feasible for many because they cannot afford to buy single items in large quantities at the expense of other needed foods. Increasingly, crime, violence and addiction are keeping people in this neighborhood as close to their homes as possible. Expensive corner stores are, for many, the primary source of purchased foods.

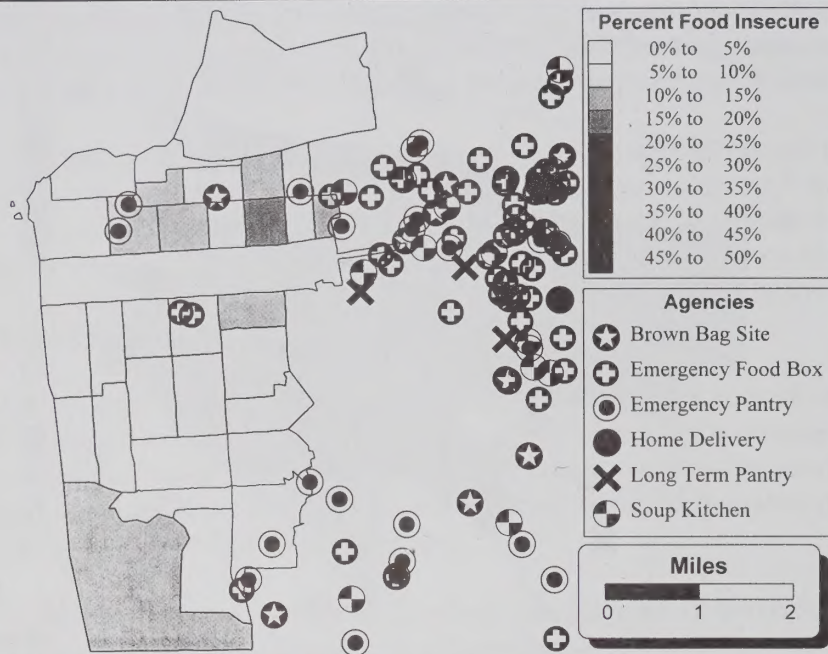
Western Addition



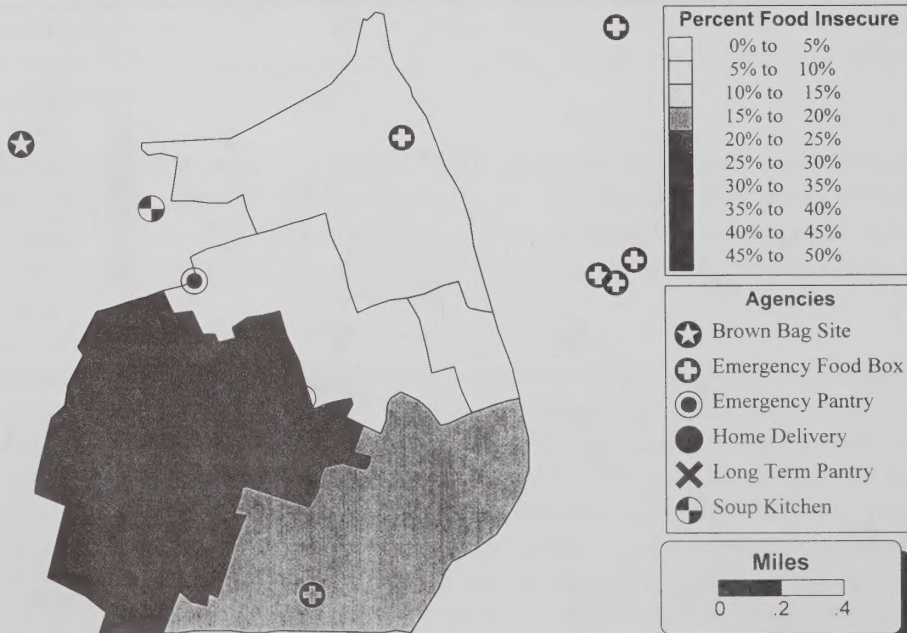
Outer Mission



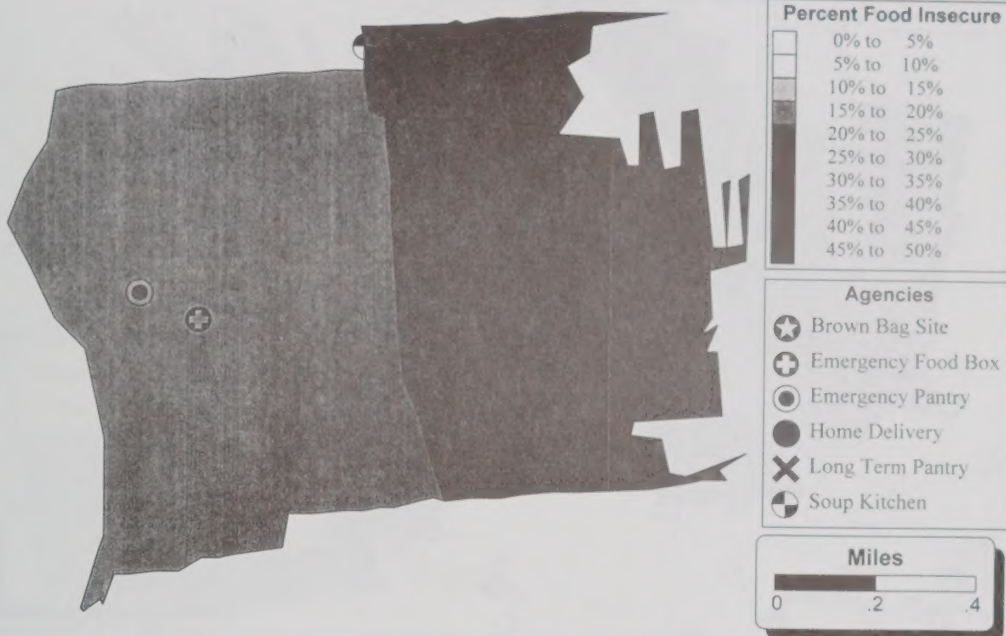
Sunset/Richmond



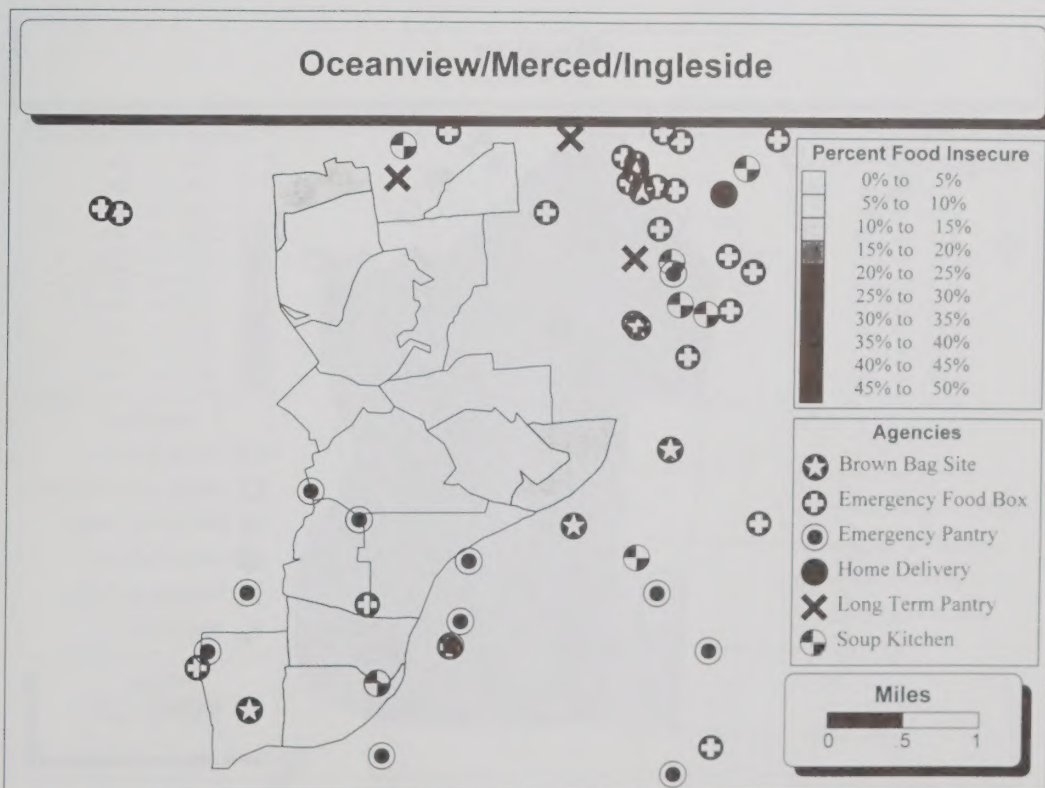
Visitation Valley



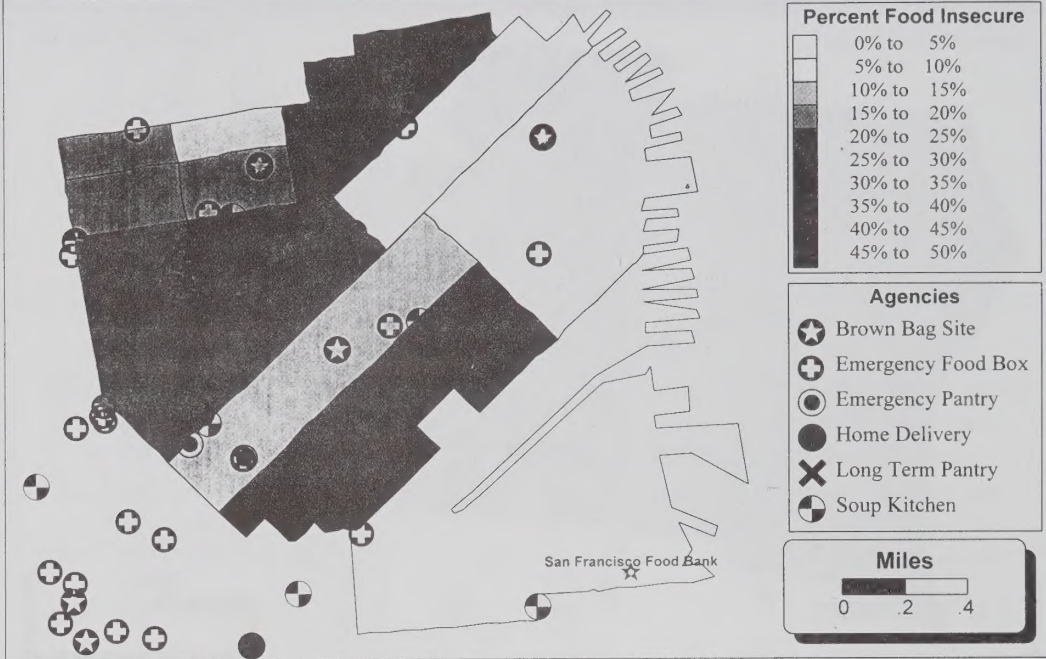
Potrero Hill



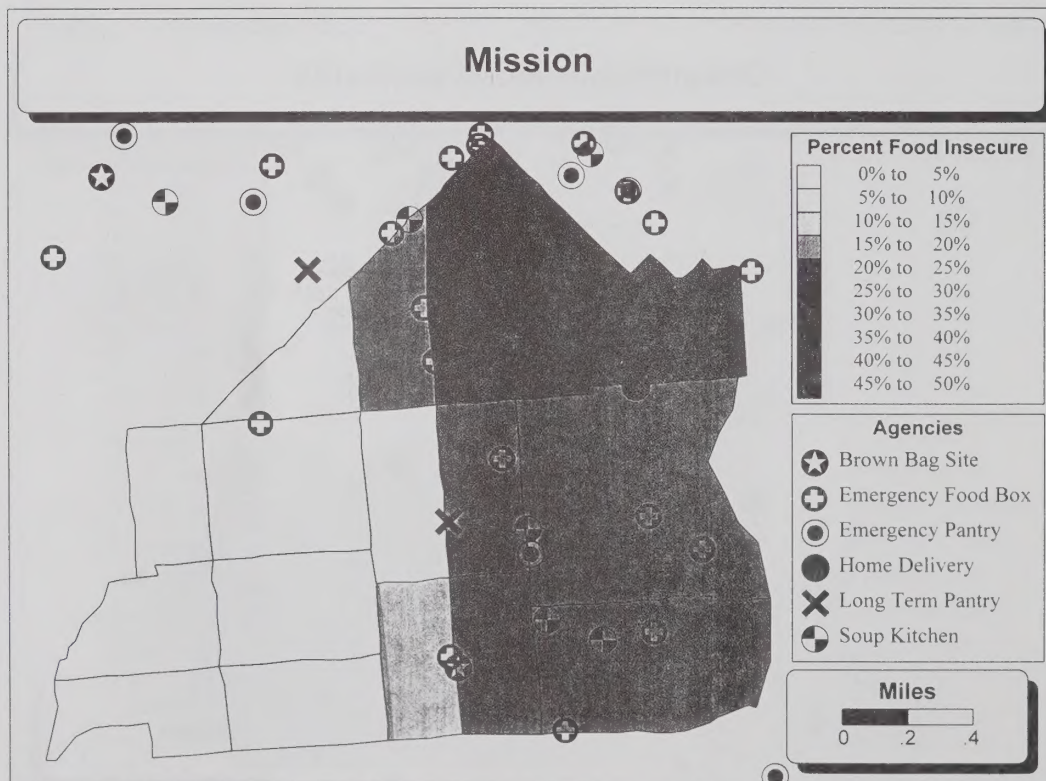
Oceanview/Merced/Ingleside



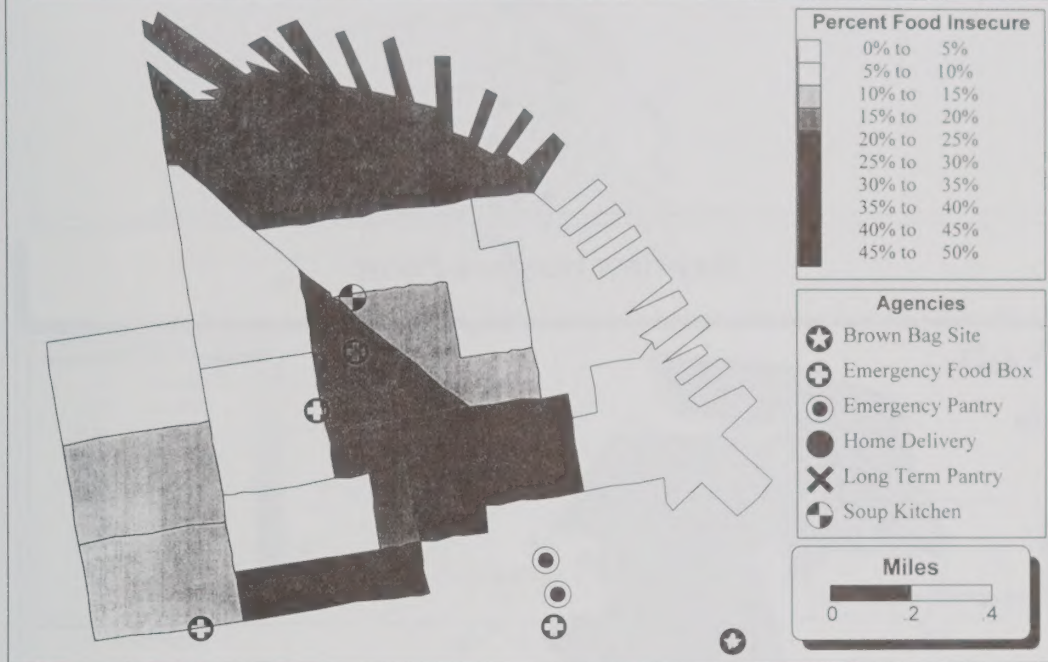
North/South of Market (Central City)



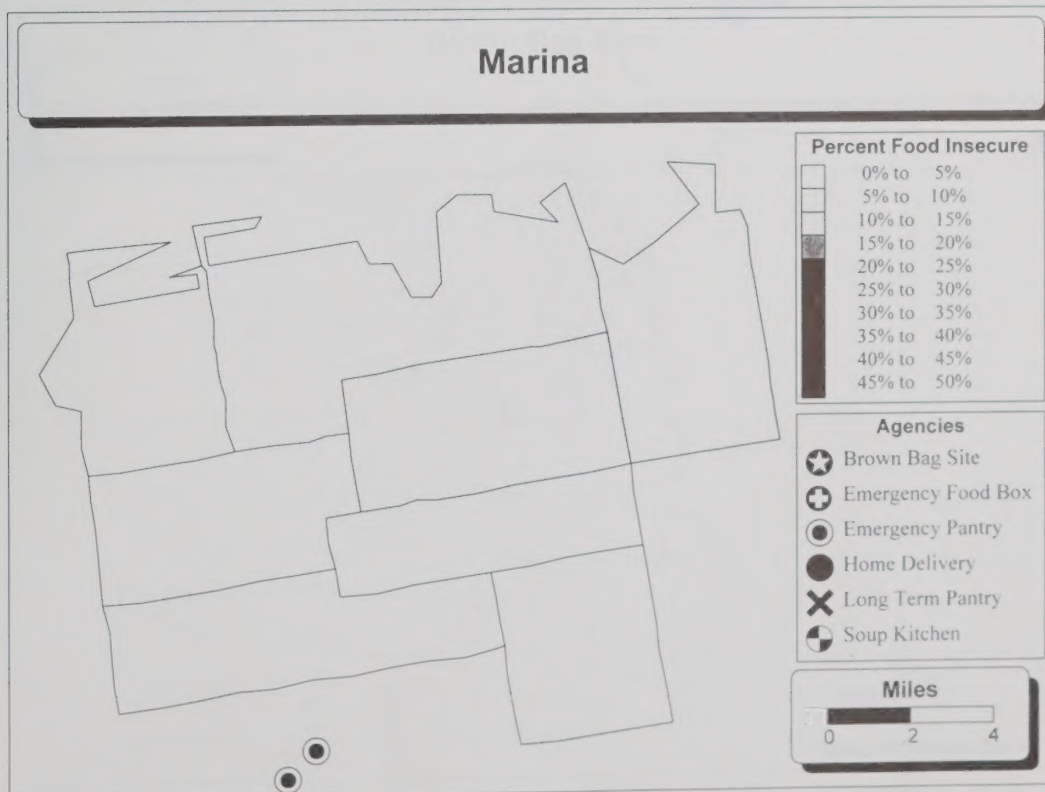
Mission



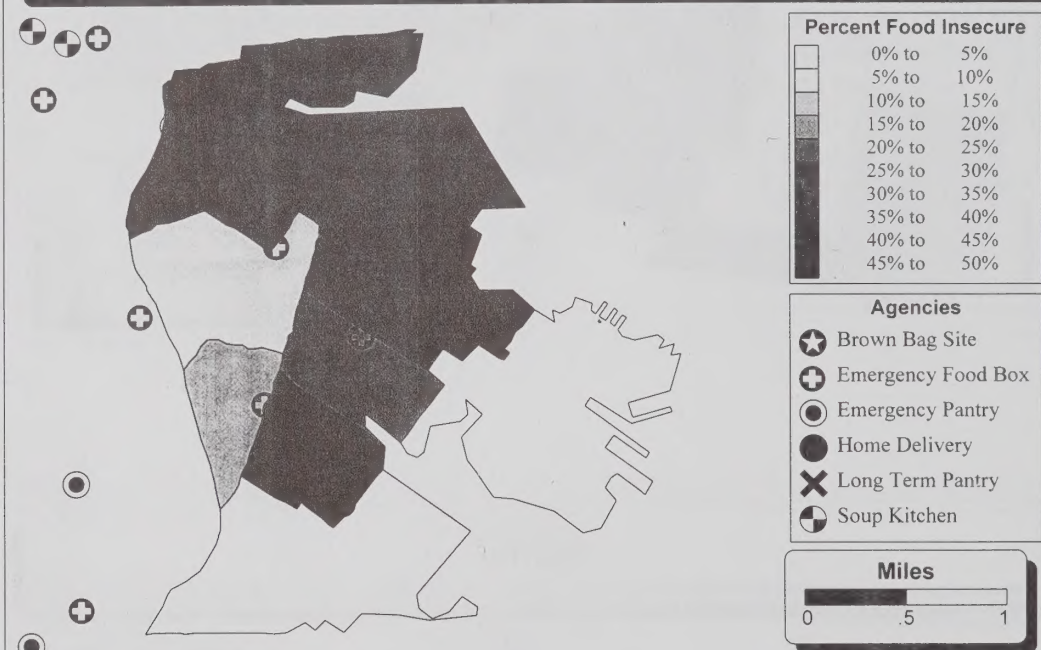
Chinatown/North Beach



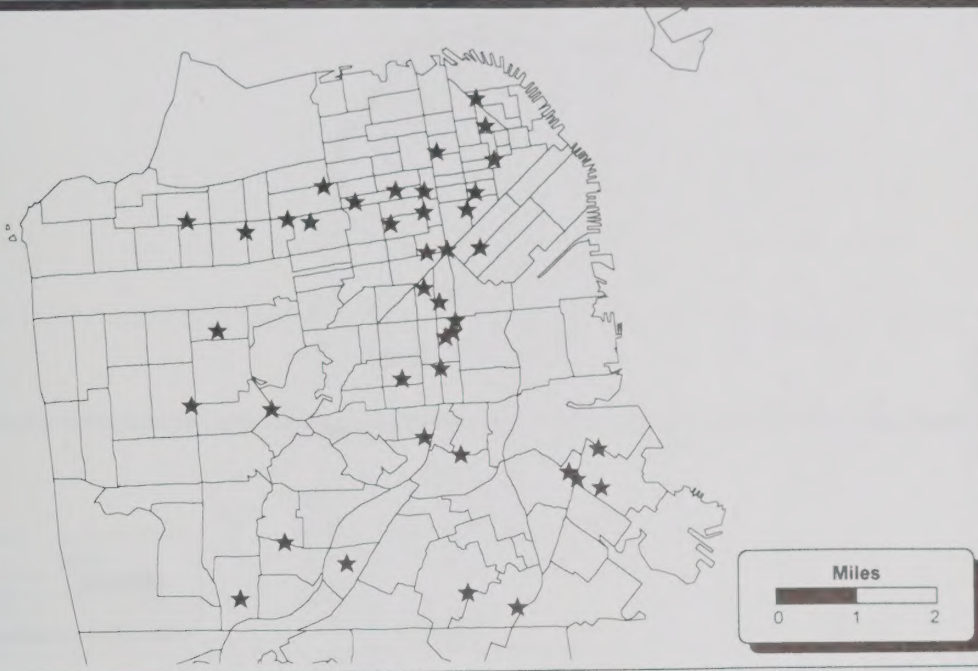
Marina



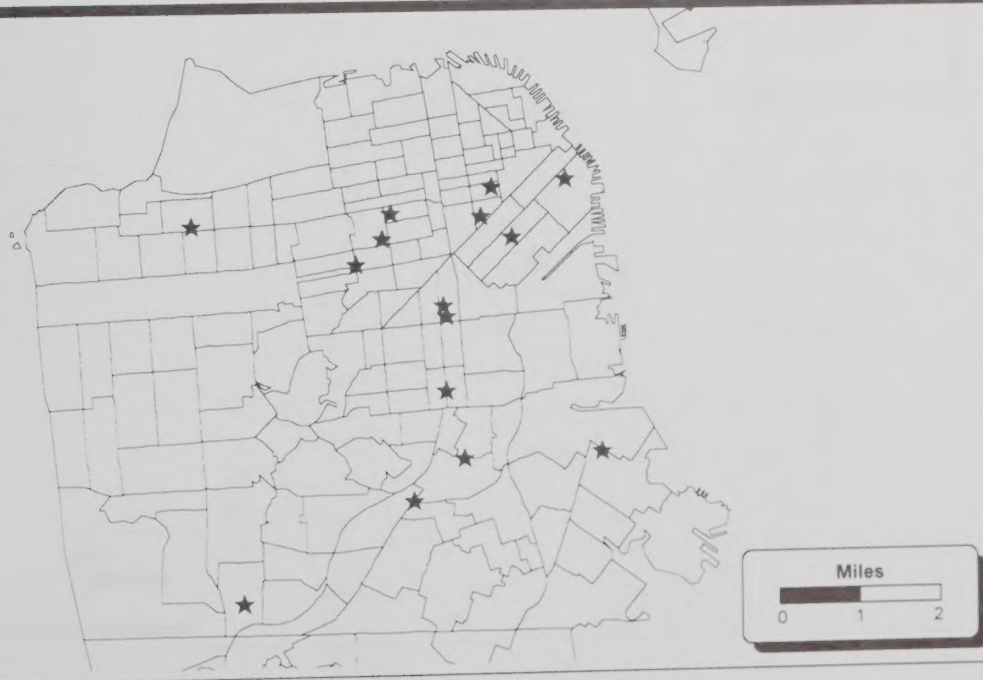
Bayview Hunters Point



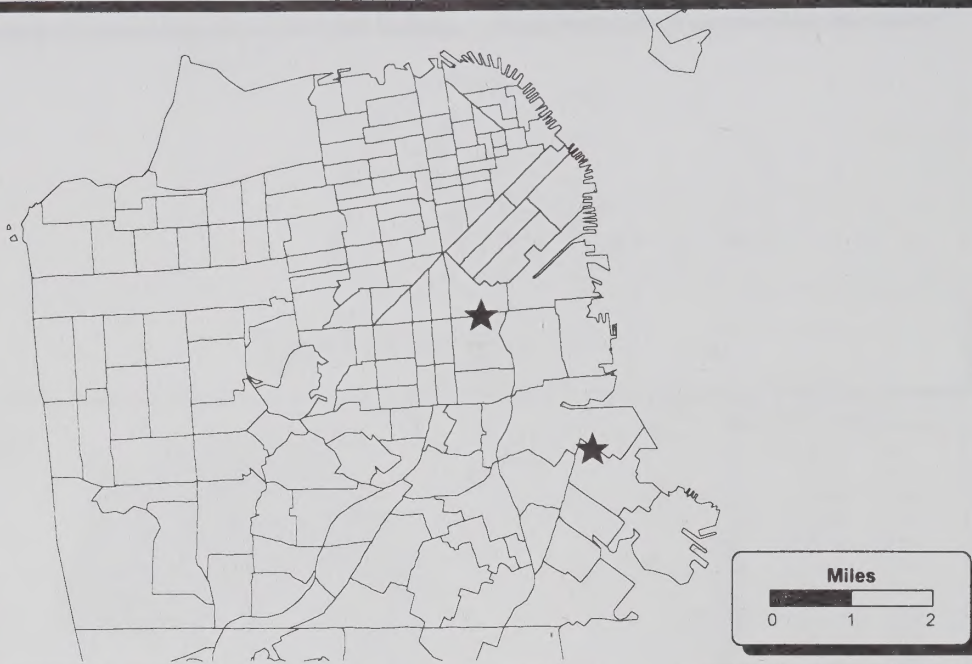
Senior Congregate Meal Sites



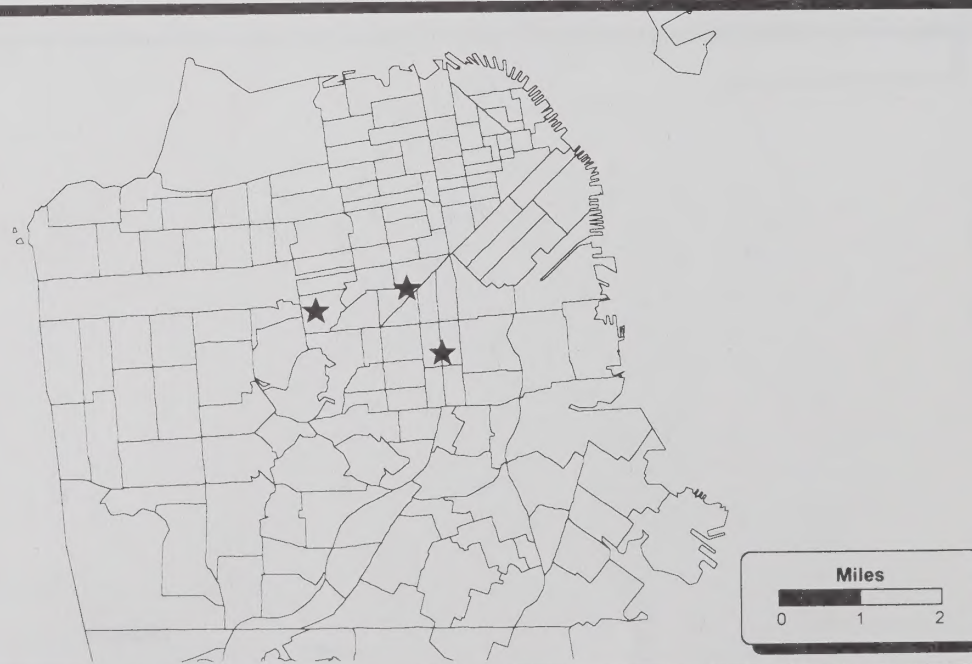
Brown Bag Sites



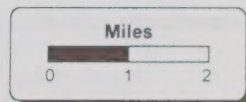
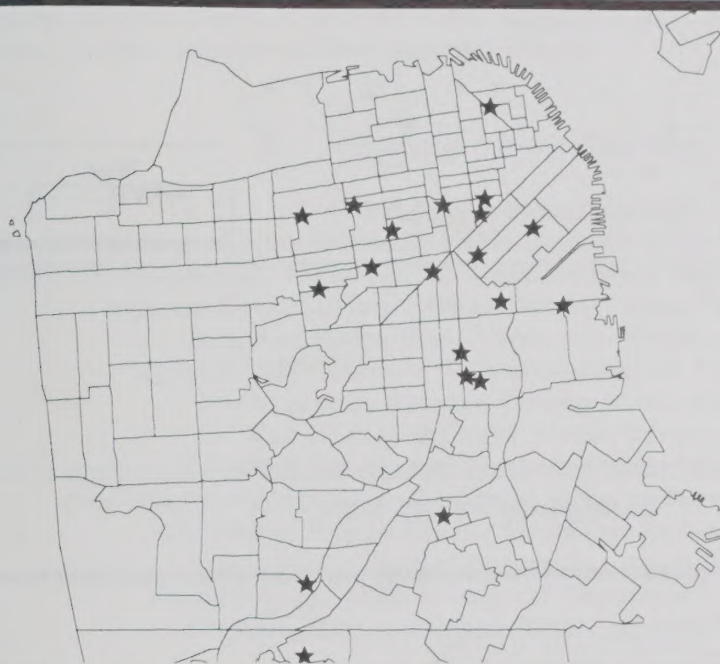
Home-Delivered Meal Sites



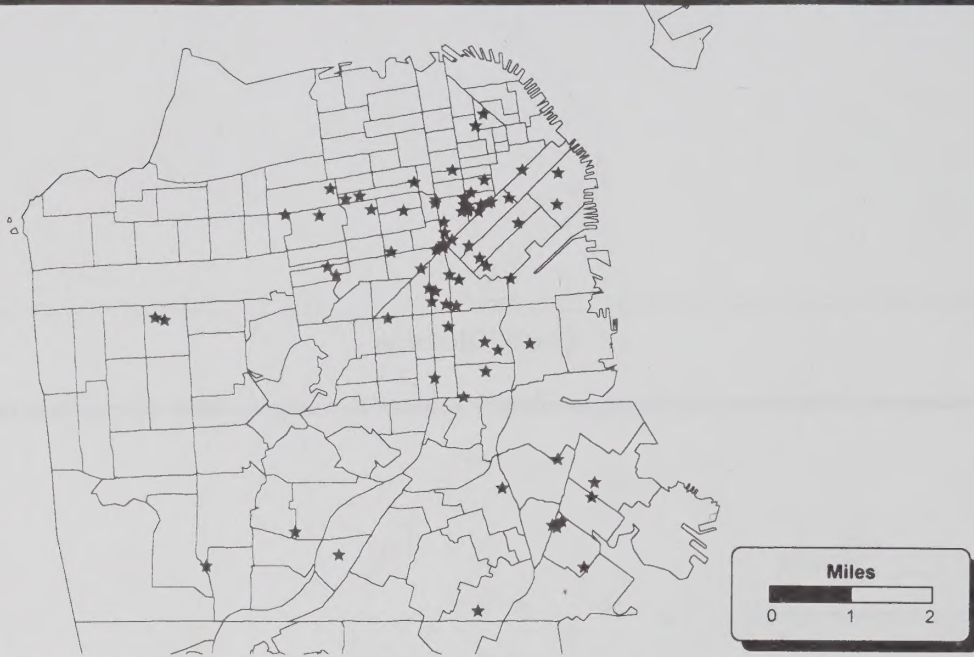
Long-Term Pantry Sites



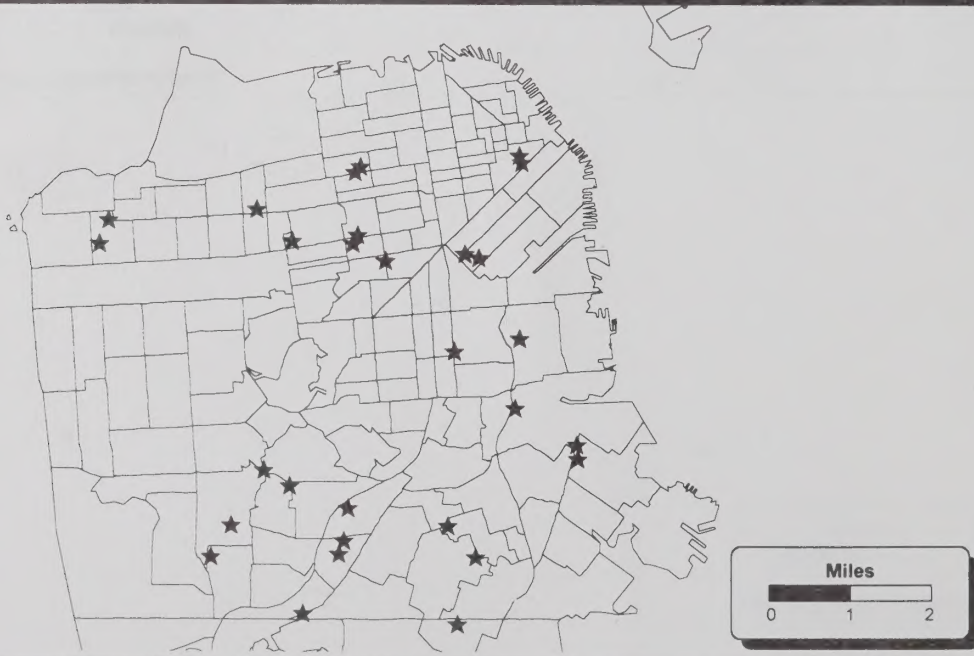
Soup Kitchens



Emergency Food Box Sites



Emergency Pantry Sites



APPENDIX C: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Thank you...

... to all the individuals who participated in community meetings, focus groups, interviews, and who filled out questionnaires. This study could not have been completed without your input.

... to the members of the community advisory committee for the many hours you put into making this a successful project.

... to the cosponsoring organizations of the community meetings and focus groups who worked hard at making this process as inclusive as possible.

... to Zy Weinberg, California-Nevada Community Action Association, and Laurie True and Ken Hecht, California Food Policy Advocates, for generously sharing information and resources.

Community Advisory Committee:

Ed Bolen, Coordinator, FoodNet
Sherron Brunner, Executive Director, Lifeline Ministries
Jennifer Carbry, Chief Nutritionist, Women's Health Center, Outpatient Nutrition Department, S. F. General Hospital
Argentina Davila-Luevano, Program Director, Mission Neighborhood Center
Susan Fox, Former Board Member, San Francisco Food Bank
James M. Illig, Director of Government Relations, Project Open Hand
Orelia Langston, Executive Director, Income Rights Project
Katherine LaVean, Social Worker, Salvation Army
Julia Middleton, Executive Director, Hunters Point Youth Park
Fred Milligan, Director, Health Care for the Homeless, Department of Public Health
Tracy Pollar, Program Director, Health Care for Homeless Veterans
Gail Priestly, Program Director, St. Anthony Foundation
Elizabeth Strand, AFDC Manager, SF Department of Social Services
Al Williams, Program Director, Glide Community Food Program

Community Meeting Cosponsoring Organizations:

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church - Sunset/Richmond
United Council of Human Services - Bayview/Hunters Point
Mission Neighborhood Center - Mission Meeting
Glide Community Food Program - Central City Meeting

Focus Group Cosponsoring Organizations:

Income Rights Project
Chinese for Affirmative Action
Whitney Young Child Development Center
Health Care for Homeless Veterans
Meals on Wheels, Inc.
Project Open Hand
Visiting Nurses and Hospice of San Francisco
Dolores Street Community Services
OMI Senior Center

Translators:

Johanna Sandoval, Mission Neighborhood Center
Jenny Sun Schreiber, Asian Service Center

Researchers and Writers:

Alan Pardini, Paul Thomas Lynch, Brad Geise

Editors:

Vickie Bates
Deirdre Moynihan

Maps:

Brian Mays

Mapping Software Provided by:

Strategic Mapping, Inc.

Additional support from Brobeck Harrison & Phleger

This study was funded with the support of

**The
San Francisco
FOUNDATION**

NOTES

NOTES

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C101696845

